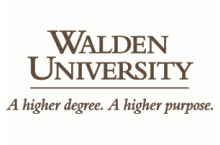

2020

Special Operations Forces Culture and Implications for Interagency Collaboration

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This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

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has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
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2020

Abstract

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MA, Gonzaga University, 2011

BA, American Military University, 2006

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Public Policy and Administration

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Abstract

The Horn of Africa exemplifies maritime instability due to regional climate, environmental, economic, food, and security issues. Future global challenges require collaborative approaches between U.S. government and military organizations to span organizational boundaries and leverage the strengths and insights of diverse organizations. The purpose of this research was to examine organizational culture and identity, as manifested in organizational literature, to identify opportunities and challenges to interagency networks and collaboration in the realm of confronting wicked problems around the globe. The research questions focus on the cultural and normative elements of organizational identity as manifest in the context of organizational literature. A qualitative organizational ethnographic approach provided a means to analyze the structure, cultures, themes, values, and interpretations of the environment present in the organizational literature and perceptions of those in the communities of interest. Interviews were conducted with 7 individuals who had served in professional capacities with organizations in the Horn of Africa. The study provided a composite description of the inter-organizational space and the results highlight key tensions and opportunities for collaboration and boundary spanning opportunities between U.S. Special Operations and the Department of State. The implications for social change include increased collaboration between organizations and the instruments of national power to better support current and emerging crises and vulnerable communities affected by instability around the world in ways that are more effective, efficient, and sustainable.

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Dedication

For the fallen, their families, and the professionals working every day for a better world.

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I owe Dr. Christopher Jones, my committee chair, a huge debt of gratitude. I would not have made it through this journey without his guidance, mentorship, and patience. Our conversations spanned years and took place from around the globe; whether I was sitting in Somalia or at home in United States, he was always insightful, a role model, and provided the motivation I needed to keep going. I'd also like to thank Dr. David K. Banner, my committee member, who provided valuable insight and an interdepartmental perspective crucial to this boundary-spanning research.

Finally, to my friends and family who have encouraged me along this journey. My brothers, Zac and Joey, have an enduring intellectual curiosity that has been an invaluable resource for my own inquiry. My children, Michael, Tahlia, Gabriel, and Lily keep me going, grounded, and full of optimism for the future; everything starts and ends with them.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Background

This chapter introduces the problem, purpose, and questions associated with a study on collaborative culture for maritime stability. Additionally, this chapter will introduce the nature, theoretical framework, assumptions, scope, limitations, and potential significance of the study. This study examined how organizational culture, as communicated through organizational literature, impacts collaboration between U.S. organizations engaged in maritime stability operations in the Horn of Africa. The purpose of this study was to facilitate collaboration in the area of maritime stability, under current policy (Department of Defense [DoD], 2012b, 2018; U.S. Navy, 2018) and the international concept of the responsibility to protect (United Nations, 2014), through a more developed understanding of how organizational culture can be an impediment or stimulant to collaboration.

Current U.S. strategies to combat regional instability (maritime or otherwise) rely on unified action, or whole-of-government approaches, to support local populations, stabilize, and eventually enable legitimate civil authorities. Unified action and whole-of-government approaches are inherently reliant on coordination, cooperation, and collaboration (DoD, 2011a, 2011b). Maritime stability, the responsibility to protect, and security issues lie at the nexus of a variety of policy issues that would each be considered a *wicked problem* (Rittel & Webber, 1973) unto itself. Wicked problems such as maritime stability and security issues require collaborative approaches that span organizational boundaries to leverage the strengths and insights of diverse organizations

(Bateman, 2011; Brinkerhoff, 2014; Earle, 2012; Ferlie, Fitzgerald, McGivern, Dopson, & Bennett, 2011).

The increasing pressures and security issues faced by populations in the littoral regions of Africa coupled with climate change show what the future may hold for global populations, including those in the more developed world (Carter, 2012; Pham, 2011). The international community is increasingly aware that few can face these challenges alone and that all nations have a responsibility to protect their populations and those beyond their borders (United Nations, 2014). Coordination and collaboration between U.S. government agencies, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and military organizations is critical to effective and efficient efforts to fulfill the responsibility to protect and promote maritime stability and security in the less-developed world (Angstrom, 2013; Brinkerhoff, 2014; Kasselmann, 2012). U.S. leaders, both elected and appointed, continually renew calls for increased collaboration between U.S. agencies, the military, international partners, and NGOs to develop whole-of-government approaches to complex regional and international stability problems (Dale & Towell, 2012; DoD, 2012b; McRaven, 2013). This research may help enable more effective collaboration between United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) and other U.S. agencies through an examination of the role organizational identity and culture in the context of interorganizational efforts and networks to promote maritime stability in the Horn of Africa and the global context of the future.

Maritime stability is an area of public policy that is of increasing concern for the U.S. and the international community (DoD, 2012b) and provides a salient operational

environment for this research. Rapidly expanding coastal populations in the developing world contribute to instability and humanitarian and security crises that are difficult to address and contain, have a regional impact, and global implications that defy borders (Carter, 2012; Murphy, 2010; United Nations, 2012). Environmental and security issues are common themes associated with coastal migration, resource competition, and the lawlessness that produce cycles of humanitarian crises and violence associated with maritime instability, as is currently occurring in many areas of Africa (Carter, 2012; Moser, William, & Boesch, 2012; Onuoha, 2010; Tase, 2013). U.S. engagement in efforts to promote maritime stability and security in the littoral region of the Horn of Africa provide a well-documented public context to examine the many issues associated with the establishment of effective and efficient interagency, NGO, and military networks and the collaboration necessary to confront wicked problems.

The Horn of Africa offers stunning portrayals of the maritime instability that can be wrought by the confluence of complex regional climate, environmental, economic, food, and security issues. However, this is not only a regional problem; the shared nature of the seas and global coastal pressures mean that the challenges, and remedies, to maritime stability in the Horn of Africa offer a window to future global challenges. Yet, despite awareness within the government of the need for collaboration, realization and implementation of collaboration remains elusive. In addition to the functional necessity of collaboration to confront maritime instability, the fiscal efficiency that can be realized through collaboration is no less important. Collaboration becomes even more critical considering the fiscal realities currently faced by most U.S. public institutions.

Problem Statement

There is significant public demand and political will to implement collaborative approaches to confront issues of stability and security globally; however, little is known about how to best accomplish this collaboration at the operational level (Joint Special Operations University [JSOU], 2019). Operational and tactical realization of collaboration remains highly contingent on personal and ad hoc relationships rather than informed approaches (Bachmann, 2014; Baumann, 2012; Earle, 2012; Egnell, 2013). Deliberate research is required to understand U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF), interagency (IA), and NGO partnerships in the context of current theories of organizational identity, culture, and networks; in turn, this will facilitate more sustainable, effective, and efficient collaborative engagement to address the wicked problem of maritime stability and security in the less-developed world.

Purpose of the Research

The primary purpose of this qualitative applied organizational ethnography was to examine organizational culture and identity, as manifested in the organizational literature, to identify opportunities and challenges to interagency networks and collaboration in the realm of maritime stability and security efforts in the Horn of Africa. Methods and mechanisms for increased interagency collaboration and civil-military cooperation continue to be a focus and subject of research efforts and policy directives, which indicate that the problem is far from fully illuminated. It is hoped that this research will produce increased understanding and awareness within Special Operations concerning the potential negative implications organizational culture may have on collaborative

interagency relationships and networks and illuminate positive pathways for increased collaboration. Ultimately, increased collaboration between government organizations and entities will produce more efficacious and efficient results in confronting wicked problems; more positively and sustainably serve the affected populations; and illuminate pathways for future application and facilitate the ethical execution of public funds for the common good.

Research Questions

I examined the organizational literature with the intent to illuminate aspects of organizational identity and culture that may either facilitate or inhibit SOF and interagency collaboration. The idea that interorganizational communication, cooperation, and collaboration (i.e., networks) occur at a variety of levels and through a variety of structures and mechanisms informed the design of the research questions. To facilitate research that was at once informative, manageable, and practically useful, the following research questions were developed:

Research Question 1: Are ideological consensus and positive evaluations of external organizations communicated and present and/or absent in organizational literature associated with Special Operations and other U.S. government organizations/agencies?

Research Question 2: How are the cultural and normative aspects of organizational identity present in the organizational literature interpreted by members of external organizations?

Theoretical Framework

The research environment is framed by current U.S. strategy guidance concerning maritime stability and security, and policy concerning interagency collaboration. The policy demanding interagency collaboration is further buttressed by current research demonstrating the necessity for network approaches to wicked problems (Bateman, 2011; Brinkerhoff, 2014; Ferlie, Fitzgerald, McGivern, Dopson, & Bennett, 2011). Problems of stability and security are inherently wicked problems and, as such, require complex approaches that often defy approaches to more simple social issues.

The operational aspects of the research are framed in current theory regarding organizational networks using Whelan's (2011) methodological framework of five interdependent levels of "structure, culture, policy, technology, and relationships" (p. 275). Raišienė's (2012) concepts concerning the leadership, structure, and elements of sustainable collaboration will provide additional context. Finally, Provan and Lemaire's (2012) provided the basis for using research to develop practical networks in the public sector that are simultaneously stable and flexible and thus sustainable and adaptable. The use of interorganizational communication theory, organizational identity theory, and intergroup dynamics will facilitate the applied approach of the study with a theoretical perspective that emphasizes practical application and results.

Nature of the Study

I chose the qualitative applied organizational ethnographic approach to study the language and culture of the communities of interest (governmental, NGO, and military organizations engaged in maritime stability efforts in the Horn of Africa) in a practical,

manageable, and relevant manner. The organizational ethnographic approach provided a means to analyze the structure, cultures, themes, values, and interpretations of the environment present in the organizations of interest (Maxwell, 2013; Yanow, 2012; Zilber, 2014). Awareness of the dynamics associated with collaboration and communication across organizational boundaries will inform better policy and organizational and individual practices for increased cross-discipline and functional collaboration in the area of maritime stability and security. The applied aspect of the study seeks to enable USSOCOM to engage other U.S. agencies and NGOs in maritime stability operations in Africa pursuant to current U.S. policy initiatives and executive intent (Department of Defense, 2012b; JSOU, 2012, 2013, 2019; McRaven, 2013).

Definitions

The U.S. military and various other government agencies utilize many acronyms and terminology that is quite foreign to those outside of those organizations. I realize that the vocabularies of government and the military are cumbersome, obtuse, or overly utilitarian; in fact, many of these aspects will be explored in this research. However, a deliberate choice was made to include and use military vernacular within this work as a bridge to that community of interest. In this section, I have included the definitions that are most pervasive and relevant throughout the research.

Civil-Military Operations (CMO): "Activities… that establish, maintain, influence, or exploit relations between military forces, indigenous populations, and institutions, by directly supporting the attainment of objectives relating to the

reestablishment or maintenance of stability within a region or host nation" (Department of Defense, 2019, p. 34).

*Country team: "*The senior, in-country, US coordinating and supervising body, headed by the chief of the US diplomatic mission, and composed of the senior member of each represented US department or agency" (Department of Defense, 2019, p. 53.).

Irregular Warfare (IW): "A violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant population(s)" (Department of Defense, 2019, p. 112).

Joint Special Operations University (JSOU): JSOU is the academic arm of USSOCOM and is the "lead component for all matters pertaining to joint special operations forces (SOF) education" (USSOCOM, 2013, p. 6). JSOU's mission is to "develop SOF and SOF enablers for strategic and operational leadership," "educate military and civilian professionals on the employment of SOF," and "research and publish on national security issues critical to the SOF community" (USSOCOM, 2013, p. 6).

Maritime domain: "The oceans, seas, bays, estuaries, islands, coastal areas, and the airspace above these, including the littorals" (Department of Defense, 2019, p. 136).

*Maritime security operations: "*Those operations to protect maritime sovereignty and resources and to counter maritime-related terrorism, weapons proliferation, transnational crime, piracy, environmental destruction, and illegal seaborne immigration" (Department of Defense, 2019, p. 137).

Operational: "The level of war at which campaigns and major operations are planned, conducted, and sustained to achieve strategic objectives within theaters or other operational areas" (Department of Defense, 2019, p. 161).

Responsibility to protect (RtoP): the principle that any nation has a "responsibility to protect its populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity" (United Nations, 2014, p. 2). Additionally, the principle of RtoP affirms "that the international community has a collective responsibility to help to protect populations from acts that have been defined as international crimes (United Nations, 2014, p. 2).

Stability activities: "Various military missions, tasks, and activities conducted outside the United States in coordination with other instruments of national power to maintain or reestablish a safe and secure environment and provide essential governmental services, emergency infrastructure reconstruction, and humanitarian relief " (Department of Defense, 2019, p. 201).

Strategic: "The level of warfare at which a nation, often as a member of a group of nations, determines national or multinational (alliance or coalition) strategic security objectives and guidance, then develops and uses national resources to achieve those objectives" (Department of Defense, 2019, p. 204).

Tactical: "The level of war at which battles, and engagements are planned and executed to achieve military objectives assigned to tactical units or task forces" (Department of Defense, 2019, p. 210).

*Unified action: "*The synchronization, coordination, and/or integration of the activities of governmental and nongovernmental entities with military operations to

achieve unity of effort" (Department of Defense, 2019, p. 224). The purpose of unified action, also called the whole-of-government approach, is to leverage the capabilities and resources of diverse organizations to simultaneously tackle the complex problems involved in stability crises.

United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM): USSOCOM is the "unified command for the worldwide use of special operations elements of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines" (USSOCOM, 2014).

Whole-of-Government Approach: see *Unified Action*.

Assumptions

Organizational identity and values are separate but often intertwined with the individual identities and values of their constituents (DeVore, 2013; Hejnova, 2010; Srivastava & Banaji, 2011). In this research I will examine culture, values, and identity at the organizational level rather than the individual level. It is for this reason that existing organizational literature was chosen as the primary data source rather than interviews with individuals; however, there will be select expert interviews to supplement the archival research and provide additional perspective. This approach was made with the assumption that organizational literature provided the best opportunity to examine the real and aspirational culture, values, and identity that permeate an organization. In the types of organizations studied (professional government organizations in which individuals join by choice and self-selection and in which professional and organizational identities are intimately tied) research has shown that it is more common that individuals

will typically act within the social and cultural norms of their professional organization (Jones & Volpe, 2011; Lammers, Atouba, & Carlson, 2013).

Finally, in this research, I assumed an optimistic and hopeful perspective concerning individual government organizational goals and motivations. The assumption was made that all government organizations exist and function with the intent to follow the policies set forth by elected officials. I acknowledge that, especially in resource-constrained environments, competition (perceived or real) between government organizations may cause them to act in survival mode, contrary to the greater good, as if they existed for their own sake rather than a larger purpose. However, this research remains nonetheless valuable for most public servants, in any organization, who are humbly doing their best for the public good, whether that service is in a diplomatic, humanitarian, military, or another capacity.

Scope and Delimitations

This research focused on the environment and problem presented by maritime instability in the geographic area of Africa, with emphasis on the Horn of Africa (including Eritrea, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Kenya). This focus was chosen for several reasons: there is an abundance of public literature available on U.S. engagement in that area; to make the research and data manageable; and because the problem of maritime instability, as well as SOF and interagency efforts, in Africa are particularly salient and a harbinger of things to come in an era of increasing coastal stresses (Moser et al., 2012). The specification of the operational environment and geographic area allowed

for a manageable set of actors, in a well-documented and highly relevant area of engagement.

The context of maritime stability and security operations was chosen as it represents an inherently challenging effort and a wicked problem already made difficult by the nature of the maritime domain, complex legal frameworks, and authorities involved (Bateman, 2011; Department of the Navy, 2012). Maritime instability and maritime stability and security operations require the participation of a complex and diverse array of actors (Department of the Navy, 2012) that cross-cut traditional organizational and disciplinary boundaries, as is the case in most wicked problems (Bateman, 2011; Brinkerhoff, 2014; Ferlie, Fitzgerald, McGivern, Dopson, & Bennett, 2011). However, the U.S. agencies that have been engaged in maritime stability and security in Africa are well-documented, as are many of their activities. Thus, the focus area of the research provided for the examination of a worst-case problem within the context of a well-defined set of actors engaged in ongoing efforts.

Limitations

The changing and evolving values and culture at institutions and organizations are one limitation of this study. This study was conducted utilizing organizational literature from the past ten years, with an emphasis on Africa. While many of the findings of this research may easily transfer to other areas of interagency and SOF collaboration, it is important to understand that each situation must be examined individually. Though the findings of this research may, and likely will, apply to other areas of SOF engagement,

further study and analysis will be required before application outside of the scope of the present study.

Indeed, this study itself may alter the course, however slight, of the SOF organizational culture and identity. If any research ultimately has the end state of making itself irrelevant by reducing or eliminating the initial problem studied, then that is a significant success. The identification of those structure, culture, and policy elements, communicated by language, detrimental to collaboration and organizational networks may be utilized by the studied organizations, specifically USSOCOM, to preclude such miscommunication in the future, in which case the study has the potential to apply itself out of relevance.

Significance and Contributions to Social Change

This study contributes to the body of knowledge and ongoing policy dialogue concerning governmental inter-organizational collaboration to produce efficient and effective remedies to complex regional and global issues. The humanitarian implications of ineffective aid are well documented (Döring & Schreiner, 2012), and maritime instability quickly spreads with tangible human, regional, and international security implications (Carter, 2012; Chalk, 2010, 2012). This research may contribute to a better understanding of the practical role of culture in effective communication in interagency operations, which can then inform the ongoing development, debates, and discussions concerning unified action and collaboration between the special operations and U.S. government agencies. Consistent and deliberate collaboration between organizations engaged in stability operations will facilitate better support to the vulnerable communities

affected by maritime instability and more ethical, effective, and efficient execution of public funds.

The fiscal contribution to social change is no less important. As the U.S. government seeks to reign in wasteful spending, and realize efficient and ethical use of public funds, the collaboration between various U.S. agencies addressing different facets of the same policy space will increase efficiency. The collaborative application of aid, whole-of-government, or unified action, approaches, use of USSOCOM assets in supporting roles to other agency activities, and enabling host-nation efforts will foster more sustainable outcomes and facilitate greater international cooperation (McRaven, 2013).

Finally, the lessons learned through an examination of effective and efficient approaches to maritime stability and instability in the less-developed world has potential transferability to future applications in other local, regional, and global contexts. As rising sea levels and population growth continue to exert pressure on existing resources and introduce the competition that leads to instability (United Nations, 2012). The problems and issues associated with increased coastal pressures, such as those seen in the Horn of Africa, are not confined to the less-developed world. Population growth, coastal migration, resource constraints, and rising sea levels resulting from climate change are realities that will increasingly challenge even the most developed nations in the coming decades (Moser et al., 2012); these realities will require the willingness and ability to span cultural, national, organizational, and political boundaries to find meaningful solutions.

Summary

This first chapter has introduced the problem of confronting issues of maritime stability and coastal pressures through unified and collaborative action. The purpose of this research is to facilitate more effective and sustainable collaboration between U.S. government and military agencies by examining the role of organizational culture in collaboration, particularly between U.S. Special Operations Forces and other U.S. government agencies. The research questions were designed to focus on the cultural and normative elements or organizational identity found in organizational literature.

This design of this qualitative organizational ethnography is supported by the current body of knowledge concerning organizational identity, interorganizational collaboration, and boundary-spanning. The organizations studied are limited to those engaged in stability efforts in the Horn of Africa over the past 10 years to provide a manageable data set that is highly documented. The implications for social change include increased collaboration between organizations and the instruments of national power to better support current and emerging crises and vulnerable communities affected by instability around the world in ways that are more effective, efficient, and sustainable. The following chapter will introduce the current literature relevant to the problem, operational environment, and theoretical basis for the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

In Chapter 2, the current literature is explored as it relates to the problem of coordination and collaboration between U.S. government agencies, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and military organizations to promote maritime stability and security in the less-developed world, specifically the maritime instability faced in the Horn of Africa. The operational environment (Horn of Africa) and ongoing efforts and policy promoting and directing interagency collaboration and coordination are explored in current scholarly literature as well as the theory that frames the problem of operational realization of collaboration through both individual and organizational mechanisms.

The operational environment and context are addressed first, to provide context to the theoretical aspects chosen to support the research. The operational environment and context includes the current U.S. doctrine and policy; an overview of the stability issues associated with the compounding pressures assailing coastal areas around the globe (including, but not limited to, resource competition, piracy, and extremist ideologies); and, a review of the current literature concerning interagency and international stability efforts in the Horn of Africa. The exploration of context concludes with a section titled *The Case for Collaboration* that combines the scholarly literature on interagency collaboration with a survey of the various political mandates for its realization.

The theoretical framework is introduced following the review of the literature associated with the operational environment and context. The theoretical framework bridges the current policy directives and literature advocating for collaboration as a

necessity to address wicked problems, including the manifestation of coastal pressures and maritime instability, and the realization of those mandates through the development of the current body of knowledge concerning inter-organizational relationships, collaboration, and networks. The theoretical framework is described in two main parts beginning with an examination of the organization and the organizational and interorganizational space followed by an examination of boundary spanning, collaboration, and associated benefits for organizations in the second section.

The first section includes an exploration of theory regarding the roles of organizational culture, individuals in interorganizational collaboration; this is a crucial component that informed the design of this study. Next, organizational culture and identity are explored in the context of current theory and the operational implications for this study. The various levels of organization at which collaboration and collaborative relationships can occur are described and frame the problem as one that cannot be solved solely through edict and policy, sustained through reliance on spontaneous ad hoc networks, or dependent upon individual action alone. This section concludes with a discussion concerning the role of implicit assumptions and intergroup dynamics that can have a significant impact on the success or failure of collaborative efforts.

The second section focuses on boundary spanning and collaboration and associated dynamics, as described in recent research. This section provides an overview of the critical roles that boundary objects and boundary spanners play in establishing inter-organizational relationships. The discussion of boundary objects is particularly relevant, as the organizational literature that is the focus of the research can be considered

a boundary object. The section concludes with a treatment of the concept of reflective practice, which can be a significant collateral by-product of the effort expended on genuine collaboration and is one element that may be seen in organizational communication.

A description of the shaping and curating functions provided by organizational communication and literature ties together the preceding two sections and leads into the poststructuralist perspective underpinning this research and discourse theory. The perspective and theory are explored last so that the reader is oriented to the context and environment before the theoretical examination. This structure allows the literature review to follow somewhat of a problem, discussion, and recommendation format. The ordering also allows the reader to be armed with purpose entering the discussion of broader theory, allows the treatment of theory to be more directed and focused, and is more complementary to a natural transition into *Chapter 3* and introduction of the organizational ethnographic approach; and more accurately mirrors my natural process as I researched the problem and conducted an exhaustive review of existing literature over one year.

Literature Review Strategy

The literature review was approached methodically with two key objectives in mind: first, to define the problem and its operational context (i.e., real-world manifestation); then, to understand the current literature framing interorganizational collaboration, organizational culture and identity, and public sector networks relevant to this study; and, finally, to tie it together with poststructuralism and discourse theory.

These areas of inquiry defined the gap in the current body of knowledge and illuminated additional areas for inclusion in the literature review. Searches were conducted using a variety of databases and search terms until saturation became apparent. Historical searches were refreshed at regular intervals (monthly) throughout the research, using previous terms and databases, and ensuring that any articles that were published during the research were included in an effort to ensure that the research remained as current as possible.

Databases

The Walden University library website and Google Scholar provided the primary access to most of the resources used in this research. The bulk of the most relevant research results were culled from Political Science Complete, the International Security and Counter-Terrorism Reference Center, and Walden's Thoreau service. Additional resources obtained through the JSOU and USSOCOM research libraries, as well as the RAND Corporation, provided additional context and were critical to ensuring that this study remained simultaneously unclassified yet credible and authentic (see the Classification Review section under Ethics in Chapter 3 for additional details). A more exhaustive list of search terms and results is included in Appendix B.

Key Search Terms

Initial searches focused on current research regarding collaboration and networks. The search terms that proved most likely to produce results relevant to this study were various combinations of organizational, inter-organizational, interagency, and policy used in combination with the terms network/s, collaboration, and communication. Results

from these searches were screened for relevance and content but also produced additional leads. Additional searches were conducted using leads from the initial search (e.g., meta-leadership) and included searches on organizational and individual in combination with identity and culture.

The research framing the operational environment was collected from the research databases as well as manual searches of the JSOU, RAND Corporation, USSOCOM, and research libraries. The fact that there is such a substantial amount of publicly available literature on the U.S. efforts in the Horn of Africa was a factor in the selection of that as the operational environment. Key search terms used to identify relevant operational literature included stability operations, maritime stability, civil-military, whole network, unified action, whole-of-government; these terms were used alone and in concert with the terms contained in the preceding paragraph.

The research on poststructuralism and discourse theory, as applied to the inter-organizational relationships and collaboration, was less fruitful than initially anticipated. Searching for “post-structuralism” and “discourse theory” and “collaboration” produced many results of applications that were from different communities of practiced but were parallel to my application here. In this regard, the results were highly relevant to this application and nest well with the research on organizational ethnography and cross-domain collaboration, thus easing any of my apprehension and initial concerns, which any researcher surely feels from time to time, about my approach to this research.

Search Results

The research conducted on the operational environment (U.S. military, government, and NGO agencies engaged in efforts related to maritime stability in the Horn of Africa) was straight-forward. The operational environment is framed by a large amount of easily referenced policy and well-documented case studies. Additionally, the pool of research conducted within the field was relatively small, and saturation was reached quickly. The literature supporting the theoretical basis for the research, specifically that having to do with organizational networks, communication, and collaboration, was much more expansive and consumed most of the time spent in the literature. There were many divergent paths discovered during this portion of the literature review. The initial search terms resulted in thousands of results from which 83 unique articles were identified for further review; of those 83, 24 were ultimately identified as core contributions, another 24 identified as peripherally relevant, and the remaining 35 discarded. However, the abundance of organizational literature available allowed for the discerning selection of only the most relevant supporting literature.

New threats emerged, and existing threats escalated (e.g., the emergence of Boko Haram and the Islamic State in Iraq as regional and international threats) during this study that only further emphasized the need for collaborative and unified approaches that span organizational and international boundaries. These threats continued to demonstrate an ability to outmaneuver the plodding and insular bureaucracy that characterizes many public, private, and military organizations and reinforces the need to develop and institute a culture of adaptive and responsive collaboration. These events and their implications

will be discussed further in the final chapter of this work in the context of the applicability of this research and future areas of inquiry.

Defining and Conceptualizing

There are certain terms and concepts that deserve a more in-depth exploration than the treatment given in Chapter 1 and Appendix A. These terms and concepts are sufficiently grounded in theory, and make a significant enough contribution to this study, to warrant this section of the literature review. These treatments have been created with the intent to be as brief as possible while also sufficiently arming the reader with valuable context to this research.

Wicked Problems

Though used earlier (Churchman, 1967), Rittel and Webber (1973) formally outlined the defining characteristics of a wicked problem. Wicked problems are common in social issues and are typically those that elude an obvious approach, and scientific or prescriptive solution (i.e., “tame problems” [Rittel & Webber, 1973, p. 160]) and any temporary remedy requires prioritization and sacrifice of valued rights and resources (Rittel & Webber, 1973). The concept is now common in those areas of study that deal with human existence and the associated messiness and formula-defying vagary that comes with our condition.

A complete list of Rittel and Webber’s (1973) properties can be found in Appendix C. The incredibly complex array of issues that contribute to the current instability in the Horn of Africa (e.g., environmental destruction, resource competition historical clan and colonial issues, and education) are wicked problems (Carter, 2015).

Perhaps more importantly, the challenges and issues faced in Africa are problems that are not as distant as many would like to imagine and are not exclusive to the less developed world. Rather these issues can be viewed as a harbinger of the problems that will increasingly challenge governments around the world as migration to coastal regions and climate change converge to place considerable strain and pressure on the commons of the world's oceans and threaten global human security (Bateman, 2011; Brinkerhoff, 2014; Carter, 2012; Kramer, 2011).

Maritime Stability and Instability in the Horn of Africa

The first edition of the U.S. Navy's Warfare Publication 3-07 *Maritime Stability Operations* was only recently published (2012), and maritime stability as an operational concept is a recent addition to the numerous categories in which the military defines operations to address certain situations. Maritime irregular warfare is described by Dunigan, Hoffman, Chalk, Nichiporuk, and Deluca (2012) in a document prepared for the U.S. Navy titled *Characterizing and Exploring the Implications of Maritime Irregular Warfare*; the publication year of this document is the same (2012) as that of the Navy's Warfare Publication on maritime stability operations. The increasing references to maritime stability and coastal pressures in policy guidance and literature betray the emerging challenges in the maritime and littoral environment and the associated ramifications for local, regional, and international human security as populations continue to move toward the coast in almost areas of the world (Moser et al., 2012).

The United States African Command (AFRICOM), a Department of Defense of geographic combatant command, "began initial operations on Oct. 1, 2007, and officially

became an independent command on Oct. 1, 2008" (Department of Defense, 2015). AFRICOM, "in concert with interagency and international partners, builds defense capabilities, responds to crisis, and deters and defeats transnational threats to advance U.S. national interests and promote regional security, stability, and prosperity" (Department of Defense, 2015).

The establishment of AFRICOM and its emphasis on developing partner nations as the primary means of stability was met with a certain amount of hopefulness at a time when popular support for the ongoing operations in Afghanistan and Iraq was beginning to wane (Gallup, 2016). However, there was, and continues to be, a fair amount of suspicion and hostility toward AFRICOM from observers within the African continent, as well as in the US (Ganzle, 2011). Nonetheless, the command was created with a balance of civilian and military personnel that is unique in the community of geographic combatant commands. The AFRICOM staff includes representatives from almost every agency, including the U.S. Department of State and built from the ground up to focus on "conflict prevention, humanitarian issues, and civic action" (Bachmann, 2010, p. 569; Ricks, 2013).

AFRICOM was structured this way as an early acknowledgment of the complexity of the problems facing the African continent. Multifaceted approaches would be required to promote good governance, the rule of law, and sustainable solutions in areas that host some of the most vulnerable populations and the embedded corruption and extremism that exploit them (Jones & Gray 2013). Thaler, Brown, Gonzalez, Mobley, and Roshan (2013) documented 12 factors shown to contribute to instability and violent

extremism. These factors include levels of absolute poverty, inequality, fragmented or ungoverned space, and competition for power and alienation of groups not in power (Thaler et al., 2013), all of which are present to varying degrees in the territory and countries that make up the Horn of Africa.

Somalia is one such space that has been in a state of near-constant turmoil since 1991 in the form of violent extremist organizations like al Shabaab and the more highly publicized piracy operations (Alexander, 2013; Turbiville, 2014). Somalia is the current focus of many diverse efforts and a coordinated approach for which AFRICOM was designed, both to address the myriad issues within Somalia, as well as prevent the spread of instability to the adjacent countries, each with their own complex issues. These efforts require an interagency approach, close communication, and coordination to bring together a variety of interests and perspectives on suitable action to simultaneously support populations and erode the conditions that foment extremism through collaboration without inadvertently contributing to tomorrow's problems; these efforts remain to works in progress (Bachmann, 2010, 2014; Earle, 2012; Michael & Ben-Ari, 2011; Olsen, 2013).

Collaboration

The study of collaboration is not new and has manifest itself in a variety of forms and fields since the 1930s. This introduction will provide a brief survey of the road to the current literature and body of knowledge concerning collaboration. As early as 1937, a significant academic effort was being invested in the fields of psychology and sociology to understand and promote the study of cooperation and competition (May, 1937). The

Social Science Research Council created 24 specific propositions and 68 research problems out of the current state of knowledge on cooperation and competition (May, 1937). Many of these are troubling (e.g., the role of genetics) in the context of the events that would follow this publication (i.e., the rise of Nazi Germany and World War II), but others remain the subject of research to this day (e.g., the role of culture).

There appears to be a pause in significant research during World War II, and the next significant contribution emerges with Mills (1958). Mills' (1958) sociological research on power dynamics was focused on the necessity to expand boundaries and promote free association. Though Mills' (1958) work was focused in the context of class and power, it would inform less action-oriented research by Levine and White (1961) and later research on networks in the 1970s.

Levine and White (1961) developed a framework of four dimensions of organizational exchange to aid in "studying organizational relationships" (p. 601). "The parties to the exchange," "the kinds and quantities exchanged," "the agreement underlying the exchange," and "the direction of the exchange" (Levine & White, 1961, p. 600) provide a framework used to examine exchange in the context of health. The authors note potential application to studying the relationships associated with military and governmental systems, among others (Levine & White, 1961).

Research in inter-organizational collaboration gained significant momentum in the 1970s with examinations of networks. Mills' (1958) work is noted as Benson (1975) establishes the "importance of interlocking networks or organizations" (p. 1) and understanding those relationships as "complex, variegated, multilevel phenomenon" (p.

1). As described by Benson (1975), the networks formed as part of inter-organizational collaboration seek equilibrium and balance across components (domain consensus, ideological consensus, positive evaluation, and work coordination) that remain salient to this research. Both domain consensus and work coordination are mandated for and between most government organizations (e.g., the U.S. Department of State is responsible for the diplomatic instrument of national power and the Department of Defense is responsible for the military instrument of power), but the functional components of ideological consensus and positive evaluation are highly cultural and social in nature.

The social and cultural elements of inter-organizational collaboration create tensions between the need for cooperation and defensiveness or vulnerability (Metcalfe, 1976). Metcalfe (1976) described these social elements along cultural, normative, communicative, functional dimensions. Successful inter-organizational collaboration is all about creating the conditions for the trust and mutual understanding required for cultural integration (Metcalfe, 1976). These conditions are not static; as Gray (1985) highlights, they must be achieved throughout each of the three phases (problem-setting, direction-setting, and structuring) of a collaborative endeavor. Inter-organizational networks and collaboration require effort and the motivation of the organizations involved. As a result, mandated collaborations are typically less successful than voluntary collaborations (Deetz, 1994).

The Case for Collaboration

Collaboration is an increasingly pervasive theme in the special operations community, almost every U.S. government agency, and at every level of government.

The topic of collaboration is recurrent and increasingly sonorous, as a necessary means to achieve efficacy and efficiency of government efforts in a world where the challenges are increasingly diverse and dynamic. The theme of collaboration is consistent and resonate, whether in the priority research topics published by the Joint Special Operations University (JSOU, 2013, 2014, & 2019), or speeches, requirements, and policy from professional, elected, and appointed leaders at all levels (Carter, 2015; McRaven, 2013; Obama, 2013; Shapiro, 2012).

The call for collaboration is not simply a fad, but rather the result of increasingly uniform awareness that current global challenges demand collaboration to minimize the degree and potential for single perspective approaches to problems which simply trade one problem for another and are little more than a shell game that realize no net progress or sustainable outcomes, other than that perceived through the lens or metrics of a single organization or element of policy (Bonner, 2013; Olsen, 2013). Multi-faceted and complex problems require equally multi-faceted responses, often called whole-of-government or unified (DoD, 2010), these responses require a consistent long-term investment that is coordinated and collaborative to have any chance of producing equitable and sustainable results (Carter, 2015).

Despite the awareness that challenging and dynamic regional and global issues require collaboration, less evident is exactly *how* collaboration is executed with consistency at the level of the individual agent and how path-dependent cognitions of interagency collaboration can be developed, transferred, and preserved for collective institutional learning (Brymer, Hitt, & Schijven, 2011; Considine, 2013). There are

conflicting accounts in the literature regarding the best mechanisms for encouraging and implementing collaboration with some advocating top-down direction and institutionalization of collaboration (Earle, 2012), while others maintain that bureaucracy and stove-piped organizational processes and culture are part of the problem (Williams 2013). Regardless, there is little disagreement that collaborative efforts are necessary to confront current global challenges and promote security and stability (Bonner, 2013).

U.S. Interagency Collaboration

Interagency collaboration gained renewed attention following the attacks of September 11th, 2001, and the subsequent findings of the 9/11 Commission findings (Bonner, 2013). These findings highlighted that a lack of collaboration and communication between government organizations severely limited the capability to detect and act upon the type of threats that we now know would dominate the early part of the 21st century (Bonner, 2013). This early call for collaboration was defensive in nature and centered on effectiveness, but fiscal efficiency and the need for whole of government approaches to complex problems were not far behind as additional reasons for government agencies to pursue collaboration as a preventative mechanism to counter instability and focus on supporting populations (Bachman, 2010, 2014).

Despite the calls for collaboration as means to enact policy, it cannot be "an end in itself, but a means to achieve certain ends" (Doring & Schreiner, 2012, p. 330). As many have pointed out, collaboration cannot compensate for bad policy or strategy, and collaboration for show can often cause worse outcomes than no collaboration at all (Manning & Trzeciak-Duval, 2010; Williams, 2013). Fortunately, there has been growing

recognition of the issues of organizational culture, policy path-dependency, and atmosphere of resource competition that must shift for true and effective institutionalization of collaboration among government agencies (Doring & Schreiner, 2012; Earle, 2012; Michael & Ben-Ari, 2011; Olsen, 2013). This recognition, coupled with developments in the field of civil-military cooperation offers renewed promise for the development of truly collaborative efforts between military and civilian government agencies (Angstrom, 2013).

Civil-Military Cooperation

The concept of civil-military cooperation has been around for some time and involves the military working with civilian actors, including non-governmental organizations, typically in humanitarian and stability capacities (Department of Defense, 2011b). However, 15 years of U.S. involvement in complex operations have begun to challenge the traditional notions of how to best collaborate to face ongoing and emergent regional and global challenges (Feaver, 2013). Though there will always be tensions between organizations and actors, there is a difference between frustrations that come from a desire to dominate dialogue, establish hierarchy, or implicit assumptions (these will be explored in a later section) and those which are a natural and healthy product of the interplay of two organizational cultures each with their purpose (Cochran, 2014; Davidson, 2013; Murdie, 2013).

Debate continues about how to best structure and apply civil-military cooperation, and whether there should be a rigid structure or emergent development that is situationally dependent (Angstrom, 2013; Egnell 2013). However, there is increasing

recognition that tension in civil-military relationships can be a good thing that can promote reflective practice and more adaptive responses in engaged organizations (Cochran, 2014; Feaver, 2013). These new paradigms challenge traditional beliefs that the military has a natural preference for conflict or must always lead such efforts (Cochran, 2014; Szayna et al., 2013; Turnley, 2011). The use of small special operations elements to confront issues in environments led by interagency and civil partners has produced significant discussion and reflection with concerning collaboration.

Special Operations and Interagency Collaboration

The Joint Special Operations University (JSOU) functions as the academic arm of USSOCOM "as an institution of higher learning focused on joint special operations education" (JSOU, 2013). JSOU has produced a variety of publications and reports authored both by its civilian faculty as well as active duty SOF members on staff and in the active SOF community. Most relevant to this research, JSOU produces an annual publication that captures the priority research topics for USSOCOM. In JSOU's 2014 edition of *Special Operations Research Topics,* there were two topics directly related to this research, and there were five topics related to this research in the 2013 edition (see Appendix D for a list of the relevant topics from the publication). Efforts to improve SOF's ability to communicate, collaborate, and cooperate with interagency partners to tackle wicked problems and better effect sustainable outcomes and whole-of-government/unified approaches and action is a recurring theme every year of the publication (JSOU, 2013, 2014, 2019).

Yet, even JSOU and many other sources often cannot see the collaboration forest for all the trees. The SOF community prides itself on understanding diverse cultures and languages associated with the vulnerable populations it often supports (Turnley, 2011), but can at times be somewhat tone-deaf concerning understanding the organizational cultures necessarily attendant in any collaborative interagency or civil-military relationship. JSOU's *Special Operations Forces Interagency Counterterrorism Reference Manual* (Ricks, 2013) provided a very thorough treatment of the interagency space and the dynamics of collaboration if SOF to effectively collaborate and achieve a unity of effort in the face of current challenges. The success of these efforts will be highly contingent on the ability to navigate the relationships, organizational cultures, biases, establish the trust, and conduct the reflection necessary to realize effective collaboration that is sustainable and which can be reliably replicated and incorporated into the organization in a manner that remains responsive and adaptive (Doring & Schreiner, 2012; Saab, et al., 2013; Szayna & Welser, 2013; Williams, 2013). The next sections will explore the organization and actions that comprise the current understanding of the mechanisms that can obstruct or provide pathways to effective and adaptive collaboration.

The Organization

In the preceding sections, I explored the political will and mandate for collaboration between the military and government agencies. These are organizations that are fundamentally part of a single broader organization (the U.S. government) and in a shared community of practice represented, in this case, by the myriad organizations

working to promote stability and sustainability in the less-developed world. Yet, collaboration remains elusive and inconsistent. In this section, the research expands beyond mandates and current practice to explore the organizational and inter-organizational space, the individuals that inhabit that space, and the effect that each can have on the other in the context of collaboration.

There is no shortage of research concerning the organization and inter-organizational space, and this allowed the selection of only those articles and sources that were the most relevant to this research. An organization can be many things. A village or society is an organization; professions have organizations that include members from various workplaces, or communities of practice, which themselves are a type of organization. Very few of us are part of only one organization and subject to the myriad identity and culture influences of the organizations of which we are a part. To compound the difficulty, inclusion in an organization can be dependent on whether the perspective is that of an insider or an outsider, a member or a nonmember (Conteh, 2013; Mor, Morris, & Joh, 2013). For example, in the context of this research, the military is an organization separate and distinct from the U.S. Department of State, yet to someone not involved in either organization, they might be part of one organization: that of the U.S. government.

So, when dealing with the term "organization," it quickly becomes apparent that it is critical to define exactly to what organization one is referring. However, when one is discussing inter-organizational collaboration and boundary spanning, the answer is not so simple. An appreciation of the insider and outsider, and member and non-member, organizational perspectives and implications are imperative to any serious undertaking

that requires collaboration (Arvaja & Pöysä-Tarhonen, 2013; Conteh, 2013). This endeavor begins with an understanding of the current body of knowledge associated with organizational and individual identities, culture, language, implicit assumptions, intergroup dynamics, and framing associated with the organizational space.

Organizational Culture and Identity

Organizational culture and identity form critical components of inter-organizational collaboration that affect the worldview, sense making, and priorities of the constituents of any organization (Raisene, 2012). Organizational culture and identity will manifest internally and externally in a variety of ways, however for this research, the tools used to communicate (e.g., the military's love affair with Microsoft PowerPoint as a means of communication) and the words chosen to communicate are the most critical as the sources of data. Organizational culture and identity are strong factors that attract individuals to certain organizations and continually shape them and their very cognition once they are members (Bender & Beller, 2013; Mor, 2013). Understanding the cultural perspectives of other organizations (perspective-taking) is just as critical as understanding the perspective-making cultural forces within our own organizations (Langan-Fox & Cooper, 2014; Mor, 2013).

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Schein (1990; 1996a; 1996b; & 2001) advanced the concept of organizational culture as a psychological and social phenomenon with consequences within our institutions and organizations. Schein (1996b) further explored the emergence of subcultures within organizations and dysfunctional interactions between types. Finally, Schein established three "fundamental levels at which culture

manifests itself: (a) observable artifacts, (b) values, (c) basic underlying assumptions" (1990, p. 111). Schein's (2001) also demonstrated how culture manifests and influences individual and groups at a variety of levels and across organizations, as is central to this research. Schein's work established an appreciation for organizational culture in the context of influence, shaping, and norming more similar to how the same mechanisms of culture are understood in the traditional anthropological and psychological contexts of societies and villages.

Most professional organizations are full of symbols, language, stories, and metaphors, obvious or subtle, and contribute to a collective identity and add to our identity. These elements of organizational culture may be intentionally derived or the by-products of operational necessity such as terseness, stoicism, and austerity in the military (Considine, 2013). The cultural aspects of organizations perform an important role concerning task cohesion and the transfer of decision-making capacity required in most organizations (Marcum, Bevc, & Butts, 2012) but can have a negative impact when not probably understood by either members or outsiders (Marshall, 2011).

The shared identity resulting from organizational culture is itself to some degree one of the defining characteristics of an organization in which members share, transfer, and assume control and decision-making as needed to accomplish an organizational goal or objective (Marcum, Bevc, & Butts, 2012; Raišienė, 2012). This can be readily seen in the operational context of this research, where members in the organizations studied willingly prioritize the goals of the organization above their own needs. For either the soldier or the diplomat, the time away from family, often in austere locations, is a

sacrifice made in the interests of the organization and myriad communities with which we identify.

The same language representative of a given organization's culture can form a basis for the selection and shaping of members while simultaneously projecting that culture in external communications, without intention, and regardless of audience (Smith, 2012). Marcellino (2013) explored this phenomenon in a manner that is highly relevant to this research through his examination of the role of language in the shaping of U.S. Marines and how that same language eventually may negatively impact communication with audiences outside of that organization and culture. The language of an organization's culture can make it appear as though there are differences in values and goals, even when there may be none, or exacerbate any small disparity between the goals and social alignment of the organization and that of the audience (Marcellino, 2013; Michael & Ben-Ari, 2011).

The implications of Marcellino's (2013) work to this research and collaboration between military, interagency, and NGO organizations is significant and demonstrates the premium that must be placed on the demonstrative language chosen for external communications. Language can prevent or interfere with effective collaboration even in areas of military, interagency, and NGO response where there is consensus on goals and objectives (e.g., humanitarian relief; Davidson, 2013). Marcellino's (2013) work is intimately tied to the phenomenon of implicit assumptions that can introduce bias to the collaborative environment that is particularly insidious and harmful to collaboration but can also be tied to another important aspect of group membership and collaboration.

Marcellino's (2013) research dealt with prototypical U.S. Marine characteristics that constrain communication outside of the community. It does not examine those who may be peripheral members of the U.S. Marine Corps. Categorizing organizational members as prototypical or peripheral offers another perspective in which the collaboration and organizational identity can be examined. Peripheral group members are those who do not embody most traits common to a given organization (Van Kleef, Homan, & Steinel, 2013). Peripheral members of an organization can play a vital role in spanning organizations and negotiation, and for a good reason.

Peripheral members of an organization, that is, those who do not closely match the given prototype of a group (Van Kleef, Homan, & Steinel, 2013), may be ideally suited to see how certain aspects of organizational culture may be perceived by outsiders (Conteh, 2013). The outsider perception can be especially important in identifying and addressing innocent or unintentional aspects of organizational culture that can cause unintended negative effects and interfere with collaboration (Raišienė, 2012). An individual from an outside organization comes to the inter-organizational space with their cognitive processes shaped and influenced by the lens of their own organizational culture (Bender & Beller, 2013). These outsider perspectives can add valuable insight to an organization that must engage with other adjacent organizations in a given policy space and illuminates, or call out, any implicit assumptions and facilitate more productive intergroup dynamics (Langan-Fox & Cooper, 2014).

Implicit Assumptions and Intergroup Dynamics

Organizational cultures and identity can be powerful forces for facilitating or obstructing inter-organizational collaboration. Implicit assumptions, in the context of inter-organizational collaboration, represent a bias that is projected onto individuals based on expectations. An example of this would be individuals in NGOs that assume that anyone in the military is necessarily invested in engaging in or prolonging conflict rather than being predisposed to "the war terminating process" (Cochran, 2014, p.72). Implicit assumptions are at play in almost all interactions and occur in the research environment, the business world, and the world of the military, interagency, and NGO maritime stability efforts.

Implicit assumptions and bias in the inter-organizational space, specifically military and interagency collaboration, can significantly drain resources, time, and negatively affect outcomes that require the dynamic and multidisciplinary approaches that require collaboration (Kteily, Saguy, Sidanius, & Taylor, 2013). These assumptions and biases have self-compounding effects that can become increasingly entrenched and resistant to change, even with, or as a result of, deliberate effort (Kteily, Saguy, Sidanius, & Taylor, 2013; Smith, 2012). Negotiations, incremental engagements, and shared goals can slowly build the trust required to span the implicit assumptions often associated with spanning organizational spaces and boundaries required to develop a sustainable and reliable framework for collaborative efforts (Saab et al., 2013).

Boundary Spanning and Collaboration

This section will explore boundary-spanning in the context of individuals and objects, the implications for collaboration, and the relevance to this study. Boundary spanning is a key component of collaboration in both intra-organizational and inter-organizational spaces. The renewed desire and interest in collaboration has sparked an increase in studies and texts related to boundary-spanning over the past five years. There were apparently few sources with information specific to military and interagency collaboration and boundary spanning though there were several proximal areas of study within public policy (e.g., social work, health care, and engineering) that were relevant to this research. This section draws heavily from a recent collection edited by Langan-Fox and Cooper (2014) dedicated to the art and practice of boundary spanning, as well as the recent and relevant literature found during research.

As the name would suggest, boundary-spanning refers to the deliberate or unintentional ability for organizations and individuals to coordinate, cooperate, and collaborate beyond their organizational boundaries or immediate goals (Langan-Fox & Cooper, 2014). Boundary spanning is often accomplished to realize a superordinate goal. A superordinate goal is a goal that exceeds the capacity or capability of any one organization (Langan-Fox & Cooper, 2014) or the interests of an individual organizational member (Rico, Sanchez-Manzanares, Antino, & Lau, 2012). Superordinate goals can also be simple devices, such as pay incentives (Rico et al., 2012), but for this research, the emphasis will be placed on those goals the realization of which require the combined capacity and capability of multiple and diverse organizations.

Specifically, confronting the wicked problems manifest by instability in East Africa, and many other parts of the world is a superordinate goal that requires a diverse and integrated interagency response (Gil-Garcia & Sayogo, 2016).

Superordinate goals are effective at increasing the ability of individuals to work across boundaries in environments as complex as those found in areas recovering from ethnoreligious conflict (McCauley, 2014). In the context of this research the superordinate goal is a product of public policy (e.g., promoting stability, good governance, and the rule of law) and the resulting collaboration is a strategic necessity to confront challenges in policy spaces as diverse as security (Bonner, 2013), public health, and criminal justice (Gil-Garcia & Sayogo, 2016) utilizing limited public resources.

The notion of a *superordinate goal* is an important concept to public collaboration and my research study. Collaboration itself is not a superordinate goal and hollow calls for collaboration simply for the sake of collaboration can often waste resources in instances where there is no common goal (Boardman, 2012) and why it is often elusive and observed less often than one would think based on the verbalized demand (Doring & Schreiner, 2012). Leadership plays a crucial to the boundary-spanning process to articulate and identify shared goals and resources (Boardman, 2012) and managing cultural differences through the identification of the cross-cutting values associated with a superordinate goal (Butler, Zander, Mockaitis, & Sutton, 2012). These elements of boundary spanning require constant attention and stewardship throughout the collaborative effort.

The pursuit of a superordinate goal or goals through boundary spanning activity is not a single act, but rather a "mind-set, awareness, or vigilance toward the ever-changing conditions that emerge in the collaborative process and relationships" (Leung, 2013, p. 456). Different phases of collaboration will require an emphasis on different elements of the organization (e.g., culture and structure) and rely on different individuals within the engaged organizations. Boundary objects and boundary spanners are two established mechanisms of boundary spanning activity that, respectively, involve the transformation and translation of knowledge in a collaborative setting (Hawkins & Rezazade, 2012; Langan-Fox & Cooper, 2014).

In addition to boundary objects and boundary spanners, Hawkins and Rezazade (2012) have proposed the addition of boundary discourse and boundary practice as two additional boundary spanning mechanisms; both focused on the creation of knowledge. Hawkins and Rezazade's (2012) concept of boundary discourse and practice, though new, are relevant to this research and will be explored in a third section following a more detailed review of the more well-established mechanisms of boundary objects and spanners, each of which will be explored in a separate section. An understanding of boundary objects and boundary spanners are two central concepts to understanding the deliberate practice and implementation of collaboration and boundary spanning.

Boundary Objects

The concept of the *boundary object* is a relatively new concept from sociology that has seen a recent resurgence in application to the sphere of organizational collaboration and boundary spanning. Boundary objects were first described by Star and

Griesemer (1989) in the context of cooperation and collaboration in the realm of science and the management of tension between various actors. Boundary objects are elements of organizations and communities that form a useful intersection of perceptions and interests that can provide a point of reference for collaborative activity (Langan-Fox & Cooper, 2014; Star & Griesemer, 1989). These objects can be abstract or concrete and can be several things, including knowledge repositories, virtual or physical communities of practice, standardized processes or methods (as was the context of Star and Griesemer's introduction), language, shared goals, or even shared enemies. For this research, the characteristics of a boundary object are more important than the specific objects themselves.

Langan-Fox and Cooper (2014) highlighted four key characteristics of boundary objects in the organizational setting, including modularity, abstraction, accommodation, and standardization. All four of these elements are important to this research as they help conceptualize how language and organizational culture can positively or negatively affect collaboration and boundary spanning activities. Together the four characteristics of boundary objects create focal points for boundary-spanning activities and collaboration that are coherent regardless of the relative contributions of one group (modularity); common in theme, if not necessarily in language (abstraction); applicable to a variety of activities (accommodation); and, follow some reasonable format that can be understood and incorporated into the involved organizations (standardization; Langan-Fox & Cooper, 2014).

All four of the characteristics described by Langan-Fox and Cooper (2014) apply to this research on organizational culture and language and its potential effect on collaboration between public organizations engaged in promoting maritime stability in the Horn of Africa. Modularity refers to how boundary objects remain coherent regardless of which organization is in the lead in any of the myriad combined efforts aimed at increasing stability in the Horn of Africa. Abstraction refers to the ability for a whole of government approach to remain thematic despite variance in individual organizational language. Accommodation involves the ability of a boundary object to remain applicable across the variety of activities that contribute to stability (e.g., security, education). Standardization would entail agreement on measurable outcomes across organizations that could be used to judge the success of the collaborative activity, as Carter (2015) highlighted, or the establishment of agreed-upon methods and processes, this is often one of the more elusive characteristics.

Boundary objects are inherently emergent and do not require consensus to encourage the collaboration through which consensus or the superordinate goal might eventually be reached (Yeh, 2013). This is because boundary objects do not eliminate organizational or institutional boundaries, but rather engage and acknowledge the various organizational and institutional boundaries and perspectives involved in an activity or endeavor (Yeh, 2013).

While the concept of boundary objects is not without controversy, especially in the context of societal and community engagement, the concept can be applied pragmatically, and without controversy, to understanding the collaboration between

organizations charged with enacting public policy. In this context, the policy itself can be considered a boundary object. Organizations within the sphere of public policy exist specifically to enact policy mandates generated through government. Thus, the issues and controversy associated with the application of boundary objects elsewhere are not problematic in the context of the current research. Though boundary objects are not a panacea for collaboration; the concept does offer helpful insight that can be coupled with other organizational elements to assist in a more deliberate and effective realization of collaboration.

As important as boundary objects are as structural elements for collaboration, there remains an equally important element of human capital to realize boundary spanning and collaborative processes (Langan-Fox & Cooper, 2014). Individuals within the organization are highly important to effective boundary spanning and collaboration in all phases from development through enactment and execution and on to incorporation of the activities into institutional knowledge and learning (Brymer & Schijven, 2011). The current era of globalism and increased connectedness has spurred a significant amount of research into the identification and development of the human component of boundary spanning and collaboration. The next section will explore the role and characteristics of boundary spanners in the collaborative process.

Boundary Spanners

Boundary spanners facilitate collaboration through practice in the same manner that boundary objects facilitate collaboration and boundary spanning through structure. Key characteristics of boundary spanners include diverse knowledge and wide-ranging

expertise, flexible, and well-connected within and outside the organization (Langan-Fox & Cooper, 2014). Leadership and training can develop these traits, though they also certainly fall, to some degree, within the domain of the inherent cognitions or abilities which people possess naturally to varying degrees (Brymer & Schijven, 2011). Discourse and training can develop these traits and sensitize all individuals in the organization to the need for collaboration, but this does not mean everyone can, or should, be a boundary spanner (Williams, 2013).

Williams (2013) identified reticulism, communication, coordination, and entrepreneurial skill as four additional common traits among boundary spanners and these traits are somewhat synonymous with those identified by Langan-Fox and Cooper (2014). Williams examined these boundary spanner traits in the context of whether organizations should identify or train versus identifying boundary spanners, or exactly who should be involved in boundary-spanning activities. Barner-Rasmussen, Ehrnrooth, Koveshnikov, and Makala (2014) similarly found that "boundary spanners have properties that not only make them valuable human capital, but also rare and difficult to imitate" (p. 886) and identified functions of boundary spanners, rather than traits, including: "exchanging," "linking," "facilitating," and "intervening" (p. 888). Further, it appears that the traits of a boundary spanner are more important than the location of the individual within the organizational hierarchy; this is just one paradox of many that can make cultivation (traits) and employment (functions) of boundary spanners a challenge for organizations (Barner-Rasmussen et al., 2014; Williams, 2013).

The traits and qualities of effective boundary spanners are often paradoxical and can present challenges within the organization outside of the context of collaboration and boundary spanning. It is not unimportant that the term *collaborator* has often had very negative connotations throughout history. Williams (2013) noted that there is tension between "working with autonomy and interdependence; being participative and authoritarian; balancing advocacy and enquiry; and being able to manage conflict using effective bargaining and negotiation skills" (pp. 25-26).

Similarly, van Meerkerk and Edelenbos (2014) highlighted how boundary spanners could increase trust within governance networks, but paradoxically these boundary spanners may have their allegiance to their organization questioned as they engage with outside organizations. Individuals who have a high degree of identification with their organization will often be less predisposed to collaboration and may view external stakeholders and organizations in a competitive manner (Korschun, 2015). This paradox can pose a dilemma for organizations who desire constituents that are simultaneously loyal to the organization, but who must also effectively collaborate with outside organizations.

For the organization that requires external collaboration as a necessary component of success, an individual's suitability to facilitate collaboration is ultimately aligned with organizational values. In this context, the responsibility for effective cultivation and integration of boundary spanners must lie within the organization and through deliberate discourse and practice. Boundary discourse and practice represent internal boundary

spanning mechanisms that serve to cultivate boundary spanning activities and knowledge within given organizational settings (Hawkins & Rezazade, 2012).

Boundary Discourse and Practice

Boundary discourse and practice have recently been proposed as additional boundary spanning mechanisms (Hawkins & Rezazade, 2012). Whereas boundary objects and boundary spanners represent mechanisms of knowledge transformation and translation (respectively), Hawkins and Rezazade's (2012) concepts of boundary discourse and practice provide a development and creation mechanism for boundary-spanning knowledge and appreciation within the organization. These concepts are relevant to this research in the context of developing human capital and promoting sustainable collaboration and boundary spanning within organizations through the inculcation of boundary spanning and collaboration into organizational culture through training and communication of boundary spanning as an institutional priority, when and where needed (Hawkins & Rezazade, 2012).

This research is concerned with organizations that must collaborate to solve wicked problems (see *Appendix C*) as a result of policy mandate and ethical responsibility; as such, it can be assumed that a premium will be placed on human capital that is predisposed to facilitating collaboration. When conceptualized properly and developed intentionally, the identification of boundary objects and roles of boundary spanners can directly and positively influence the efficacy and frequency of collaboration between organizations and communities and promote organizational learning (Erlandson, 2014). A deeper examination of cultural intelligence elements of human capital that

contribute to collaboration and boundary spanning will lead to sections concerning the realization of collaboration and the inherent benefits for organizations.

Cultural Intelligence

The discussion of boundary spanning would not be complete without an examination of the individual trait of cultural intelligence. Cultural intelligence is a significant component of human capital that refers to the individual ability or predisposition to adapt to and engage with diverse people and settings (Li, Mobley, & Kelly, 2016). Cultural intelligence is a trait that is highly desirable in the modern global marketplace and is increasingly becoming valued in the military. Cultural intelligence has been shown to have varying degrees of relation to other personality traits and consistently contributes to positive outcomes when individuals are faced with engagements or situations requiring adaptation (Li et al., 2016).

Baalbaki (2015) advanced the idea of cultural intelligence with the introduction of the *cross-cultural quotient* (CCQ) and scale that consists of attitudinal and behavioral dimensions, each with three factors. Baalbaki's three attitudinal factors are: "accepting or inviting of others, interpersonal relationships, and open-door policy" (p. 19); while the behavioral factors are: "active experience, passive experience, and personal experience" (p. 19). Baalbaki's CCQ might provide a valuable tool for organizations to identify existing members who are well-suited for boundary spanning or as a screening tool for organizations looking to better select personnel based on cultural intelligence and adaptability.

SOF has demonstrated an ability and aptitude to appreciate culture when it is that of the supported population. Through emphasizing language and cultural fluency, SOF, and specifically U.S. Army Special Forces, have enjoyed significant success over the years engaging populations around the world, usually in very small groups. Turnley (2011) showed why culture matters, how SOF can continue to cultivate, institute, and select for cross-cultural competence in "warrior-diplomats" (p. 1), yet the focus is solely on these attributes as applied to the supported populations in foreign countries and engagements.

Cultural intelligence is particularly relevant to SOF operating in global environments, including the interagency space in the Horn of Africa, in which individuals must engage with the diverse local cultures as well as the cultures of adjacent agencies and nongovernmental organizations. The same cross-cultural competency developed and trained within SOF to be applied in the context of foreign populations can also be applied to inter-organizational collaboration and boundary spanning (Spencer, 2014). Spencer (2014) identified "a basic understanding of what culture is and how it affects people's worldviews, and the ability to think critically and creatively" (p. 30) as the two cognitive components of cultural intelligence; these components are equally applicable to navigating the foreign nature of adjacent organizations as they are to engaging with overseas populations.

Moon (2013) has shown a positive correlation, over time, between the success and performance of multi-cultural teams and cultural intelligence. It is important to note that more diverse teams initially perform lower than those teams with less diversity; their

performance increases faster with higher cultural intelligence (Moon, 2013). One can see the importance of cultural intelligence in those areas of practice where collaboration and boundary spanning with different organizations (each with their own culture) is a requirement for efficacy in addressing wicked problems.

Collaboration at Work

As previously discussed, few, if any of us are members of only one organization. I am simultaneously a member of the military as an organization that may be separate and distinct from the State Department, yet both organizations share membership in the broader organization of the U.S. government. So, elements such as task cohesion can be conceptualized at the "right" level of organizational membership (e.g., U.S. government objectives) or context (e.g., disaster response) to facilitate collaboration outside the most immediate or apparent level of organizational identity. Professional journals are full of articles that show an increasingly reflective stance, and that acknowledge the internal impediments to collaboration (Carter, 2015).

Raisene (2012) stressed the importance of implementing collaboration at the correct level and that it cannot be forced through edict. Collaboration must move beyond simple noncompetition and be forged through natural and participative partnerships that bring real contribution to a given mission or desired end state to be anything other than a hollow enactment of an academic concept or leadership fad (Raisene, 2012). It is in this domain that the boundary object, the shared goal or end state, is critical to establishing the inter-organizational vision and the innovative social interactions forged by boundary

spanners must be given the latitude to forge real relationships that bind the organizations in true collaboration (Langan-Fox & Cooper, 2014; Raisene, 2012).

Collaboration has benefits that extend well beyond any of the noticeable advantages of efficacy and efficiency enjoyed at the organizational level. Research suggests that those who can span organizational boundaries gain fresh insight, perspective, and a deeper understanding of their field or profession. This insight is associated with greater self-efficacy, a more flexible identity, and the insights gained in boundary-spanning usually contribute to the growth and development of the organization itself (Langan-Fox & Cooper, 2014).

Reflective Practice

There are additional professional and institutional benefits beyond the fiscal and operational efficiency and effectiveness likely to result from increased military and interagency collaboration. The extra effort, introspection, and reflection required to collaborate, coordinate, and communicate across institutional and organizational boundaries directly contribute to reflective practice (Langan-Fox & Cooper, 2014). Reflective practice develops a deeper understanding and appreciation for an individual's profession and why and how the execution of their tasks fits into a larger whole or network. Through reflective practice, collaboration becomes a perspective-making activity that returns valuable insights to the organization and results in more dynamic individual and group identities that are better poised to seize opportunities as they arise (Langan-Fox & Cooper, 2014).

Reflection in the realm of boundary spanning is separate from the trained operational perspectives necessary for individuals to carry out their day-to-day tasks within an organization (Erlandson, 2014; Langan-Fox & Cooper, 2014). Trained perceptions allow individuals within an organization to function efficiently and effectively within predicted or routine scenarios (Erlandson, 2014). However, new perceptions are required to apply to collaborative and boundary-spanning activities, and efforts and reflection on practice can facilitate the formation of collaborative practice through critical examination (Erlandson, 2014).

Guzman (2013) highlighted the importance of collaborative perceptions developed through reflection and necessary to collaboration as those "cognitive mechanisms used to know how to shift from the inside to the outside view, and vice versa" (p. 446). Yet, this also highlights the previously discussed tension between membership in an organization and boundary spanning ability as manifest through the tacit and explicit-oriented tools cultivated within a given organizational setting (Guzman, 2013). Because of this, reflective practice and new perceptions must be cultivated and institutionalized through deliberate organizational learning at the individual, group, and organizational levels (Hilden & Tikkamaki, 2013). Ultimately "reflective practice is the actual way in which reflection is manifest through individual and collective action" (Hilden & Tikkamäki, 2013, p. 82) and should be visible in the four domains of capacity, dialogue, experiments, and management control.

Effective boundary-spanning requires in-depth knowledge understanding about one's organization, including its strengths and weakness, in addition to an honest

appreciation of the perspectives held by outside organizations and individuals (Langan-Fox & Cooper, 2014). Overly rigid and non-participatory organizational structures can be inimical to critical reflection and stifle the cultivation of perceptions conducive to collaboration and boundary spanning (Raelin, 2012). Practitioners and leaders must cultivate dialogue and deliberation at all levels of the organization (Raelin, 2012) to promote the reflection and organizational learning required to bring about collaborative reflective practice (Hilden & Tikkamäki, 2013). Organizational and professional literature can provide insight into organizations and communities of practice and the degree to which supportive structures, language, discourse, and dialogue create the reflective space and participatory framework to facilitate reflective practice and collaboration beyond a simple mandate.

Organizational Literature as a Shaping and Curating Mechanism

Organizational literature is part of the recursive practices of narration and curation and is simultaneously an artifact and a social process (Brymer, Hitt, & Schijven, 2011). In this regard, organizational literature is an expressive feature of the organization that simultaneously shapes the behaviors and cognition of organizational members and can also be a means of communication and priming, whether intentionally or not, to outside organizations and individuals (Carter, 2013). It is in this context that organizational literature provides a valuable lens to gauge whether a given organization is enacting and institutionalizing the components of successful collaborative culture, as explored earlier, or mired in old practices and simply calling for collaboration without inculcating its practice throughout the organization (Langan-Fox & Cooper, 2014).

Words matter and the words chosen to communicate purpose and membership within a given organization can say a great deal about that organization's perspective and culture. These words also shape the members of the organization and provide an artifact that documents organizational perspectives with a curating functionality to those with membership (Jones & Volpe, 2011; Korschun, 2015). Furthermore, reading and interpreting publicly available organizational literature is not restricted to those within the organization even though, in some cases, they may be the intended audience. From a poststructuralist perspective, language "plays a role of 'bridge' between thought and action" (Sayin & Davut, 2012, p. 12), and this can be illuminating concerning any incongruence between calls for collaboration and its functional realization.

The role of organizational literature is not insignificant; one can assume that leaders and members in adjacent organizations with whom collaboration is desired may read available literature if they are doing their part as boundary spanners. Thus, in addition to its influence on internal members, organizational literature can influence and shape the perceptions of collaborative partners (Erlandson, 2014), whether intentionally or not. Additionally, organizational literature provides a resource to examine the routine perspectives and values of an organization that is not skewed by awareness of examination, as might be the case in other venues (e.g., in an interview or a meeting with collaborative partners).

Ethnography and Organizational Research

The approach to this study, and conceptualization of the inter-organizational space is firmly grounded in post-structuralism and discourse theory. Though often

applied to societies or governments, here discourse theory provides the means to explore the relations between the unique "societies" represented by the different cultures, language, and perspectives associated with the government organizations, agencies, and communities of practice that are the subject of this study (Phipps, 2012). The decision to approach this research from the poststructural and discourse theory perspective was the result of a long journey through the literature and other factors.

Ethnographic approaches are often well-suited to exploring the elements of culture and language unique to communities or societies. The application of the ethnographic method to organizational studies is based on the realization and recognition that the social dynamics (e.g., rituals, routines, language) involved in organizations share similarities in function to those involved in the more recognizable social constructs such as villages or tribes (Kalou & Sadler-Smith, 2015). Government organizations are no exception and may show exaggerated cultures as a result of typically being created or formed for separate and distinct purposes (e.g., diplomacy, defense, finance).

The organizational ethnography offers an approach that facilitates the examination of the cultural elements present in the subject organizations and the interplay of these dynamics in the inter-organizational space. Though the organizations in this study share the common language of English, this does not mean that words always mean the same to adjacent organizations, even where intent may be aligned. Diplomatic and military organizations seek to fulfill the same objectives (actualization of a parent government's policy and plans), but the means they employ are different, and the language used in each is vastly different. This can create a situation where two or more

agencies may be in violent agreement about the desired end state, yet that is not what is received or perceived by each due to differences in organizational culture as manifest in the language used in communication. The organizational ethnography allows for the study of organizational culture and language in context (within the organizational setting) and how it may be perceived out of context (from the perspective of adjacent organizations).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored the operational environment (the Horn of Africa) and the context of the problem (interagency efforts to combat threats to stability in the littoral area of East Africa). I have made a case for applying a poststructuralist perspective and using discourse theory as the theoretical basis for exploring the problem using an organizational ethnographic approach. Finally, an examination of the currently existing research on coordination and collaboration across organizational boundaries and domains of expertise and professions provided insight into the multiple dynamics associated with boundary spanning and outlined a gap in the existing body of knowledge concerning interagency collaboration between the distinct cultures of the U.S. military and interagency partners. All these topics inform and define the specific approach of this research to the dynamics of special operations and interagency collaboration.

Summary

This literature review has spanned a wide variety of topics: from current U.S. policy to the cognitive and psychological aspects of identity; interorganizational dynamics and communication; boundary spanning including boundary objects, spanners,

discourse, and practice; human capital; and, concluded with an overview of the applicability of the ethnography to the organizational setting and this research. Through the literature, we see recurring themes that place acknowledge the highly social and personal interactions required for successful collaboration as well as the structural and functional components involved.

Major Themes

Organizations, both public and private, are placing an increasing emphasis on inter-organizational collaboration to increase efficacy while confronting complex problems in the modern world. Additionally, in both the competitive global marketplace and public policy space, collaboration offers efficiencies and economies of effort. However, collaboration is often more easily discussed in theory than implemented with purpose and clarity in practice.

The are several recurring themes found throughout the literature on collaboration and boundary spanning, not the least of which is that there are individual and personality-driven (inherent cognition) aspects associated with collaboration and there are path-dependent cognitive aspects that are influenced by the organization itself (path-dependent cognitions); these correlate to the boundary spanners and boundary object elements found in the boundary-spanning literature. This should be no surprise; organizations are made of people and can be viewed as a form of society. Yet the reality that collaboration often hinges on a few unique individual boundary spanners does not mean that organizations must rely solely on ad hoc relationships or the “luck of the draw” concerning

collaboration. There are key traits present in these individuals and their activities that can be taught or learned.

Language, as much as people, matters and functions as an element of membership and an advertisement of purpose and values. As both a shaping and curating mechanisms for organizational identity, language has significant implications for collaboration in the inter-organizational space. However, the discourse that is constructed without the deliberate intent of collaboration may be more telling about the actual potential for inter-organizational collaboration than that which is constructed specifically for collaboration.

Gaps in the Current Body of Knowledge

The literature focused on the operational context on the theoretical aspects illuminates significant gaps in the current body of knowledge and understanding. Within the literature on the operational context (maritime stability and interagency collaboration), the continual call for more collaboration has been answered by a deafening silence from any literature concerning exactly how this would be accomplished and institutionalized at the operational or tactical level. There is no shortage of information concerning the benefits of interagency coordination and even suggestions on how it might be measured, but mechanisms to move beyond individual cognition (e.g., personality) to incorporation into collective cognition are lacking.

There seems to be a paradox at the strategic and operational levels of organization wherein the calls for collaboration are equally matched by organizational literature (i.e., strategic communication) that demonstrates a lack of appreciation for the basic elements of organizational culture that can either facilitate or impede the exact collaboration that is

being demanded. This is particularly interesting given that the central community to this study (SOF) community is very aware that culture matters when it concerns operating among foreign populations. Yet, research produced not one article that even insinuated that we might begin through reflective practice that applies the same sense of cultural fluency to interagency operations.

The language of one's organizational culture is manifest through speech, and this may negatively impact communication between organizations in the government civil-military setting. This problem has been examined at the individual level and in the context of how the variability of the social correctness of one's speech changes depending on the receiving organization. However, there has been little research on the communications of the organizations themselves.

Recurring annual emphasis on research topics centered on *interagency*, *collaboration*, *cooperation*, *communication*, and *whole-of-government* is indicative of the need for continued research in this area. As is often the case, defining the problem is as much an issue as finding the answer. This research deliberately uses post-structuralism and discourse theory, as they are unlikely to be found in military circles (another recurring JSOU topic is how to better quantify population and social characteristics that inherently defy quantification). This research examines organizational literature to understand how those communications may manifest organizational culture and potential shaping effect on the cultivation or implicit value placed on boundary-spanning and collaboration from both insider and outsider perspectives.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to facilitate collaboration between U.S. interagency and Special Operations Forces (SOF) collaboration in maritime stability through an examination of the role of culture and language in the inter-organizational space. A qualitative organizational ethnographic approach was chosen as the most appropriate methodology for this research. This chapter will describe the research method and chosen approach, including: the justification, rationale, research questions, population and setting, the role of the researcher, methodology, issues of trustworthiness, and the ethical issues associated with this research effort.

Research Design and Rationale

The qualitative organizational ethnographic approach provided appropriate mechanisms and context to explore and describe the interplay of organizational culture and collaboration in the interagency environment through both individual and organizational perspectives. My involvement with organizations studied, access to the research environment, and reflexivity also contributed to the selection of the organizational ethnographic approach. The subjective experiences and perspectives of those within organizations, how those perspectives and elements of organizational culture are communicated externally, and how the organizational culture and language are perceived by members of other organizations is an area of social activity ideally suited for study with the qualitative ethnographic method.

Many different approaches were considered during the development of this research. The quantitative method was discarded, as this research does not seek to prove or judge anything (e.g., whether one agency's approach or culture is better than that of another). Rather the intent of the research was to illuminate the problem, describe aspects and elements of organizational culture that affect collaboration and provide insight to facilitate increased interagency collaboration in the exceedingly complex and uncertain environment of stability operations in the developing world.

Research Questions

The following research questions were developed with the intention of providing useful insight into the dynamics of interagency and SOF collaboration, while also keeping the research focused and manageable. The first research question (RQ1) is intended to identify elements present in organizational literature that are conducive to inter-organizational networks and collaboration. The second research question (RQ2) provides insight into the insider and outsider perspectives associated with communicated organizational culture and identity in the context of collaboration and boundary-spanning. The research questions were:

Research Question 1: Are ideological consensus and positive evaluations of external organizations communicated and present and/or absent in organizational literature associated with Special Operations and other U.S. government organizations/agencies?

Research Question 2: How are the cultural and normative aspects of organizational identity present in the organizational literature interpreted by members of external organizations?

Central Concepts

Interagency collaboration, maritime stability, and organizational culture were the central concepts of this research. These concepts, as explored in the literature review, were the core from which search terms were derived. The concept of organizational culture is both expressed and interpreted with potential effects on collaboration at the individual and group levels during the conduct of maritime stability operations.

This inquiry was grounded in Metcalfe's (1976) dimensions of social integration and dimensions of inter-organizational collaboration, specifically the cultural and communicative dimensions, as expressed through external organizational literature. U.S. government organizations are continually tackling new problems and compete for resources for which Benson's (1975) components of ideological consensus and positive evaluation are continually negotiated. As a shaping and curating mechanism, organizational literature serves as a good resource for understanding the dynamics and tensions associated with collaboration and boundary-spanning (Carter, 2013; Langan-Fox & Cooper, 2014).

Maritime stability is a core concept because it provides the operational environment in which this research is being conducted. The research environment (the Horn of Africa) represents a harbinger of things to come for other areas of the world, as global populations, in both the developed and less developed world, continue to urbanize

and move toward the global commons of the seas (Moser, Williams, & Boesch, 2012). The concept of maritime stability operations has only recently emerged as a distinct and unique doctrine (Department of the Navy, 2012; Dunigan, Hoffman, Chalk, Nichiporuk, & Deluca, 2012), as leaders have developed and appreciation for the complex international and interagency challenges (i.e., the whole of government) and nuanced approaches necessary to confront instability in the maritime domain and littoral regions of the world (Brinkerhoff, 2014; Ganzle, 2011; Kasselmann, 2012; United States Africa Command, 2015).

Research Population and Setting

The population utilized for this research was the U.S. government agencies, NGOs, and SOF engaged in maritime stability operations in the Horn of Africa during the period of 2010-2016. The population was restricted to U.S. organizations in order to: focus on organizational culture, as opposed to other cultural variables that might confound collaboration (e.g., language and national culture); provide a manageable and accessible population for study; increase the chances that any research findings might contribute to better governance. Additionally, the population was further restricted to those organizations persistently engaged in maritime stability operations in the Horn of Africa for a period of at least five years.

The setting is maritime stability operations in the Horn of Africa. Most of the government agencies confronting the stability issues in the Horn of Africa are based either in the Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) located at Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti City, Djibouti or in Nairobi, Kenya (United States Africa Command, 2015; Bachmann,

2014). Interviews were conducted in the United States subsequent to participants' service in the operational environment.

Organizational Ethnography

The decision to approach this problem from the perspective of an organizational ethnography was informed by several key aspects of the problem, context, as well as my access to the organizations of interest and operational environment. Organizational ethnographies have been demonstrated to be particularly well suited to the development of cultural understanding in a manner that often eludes other approaches (Eberle & Maeder, 2011; Neyland, 2008). Organizational ethnographies have become increasingly legitimized over the past decade as an approach that can provide valuable insight into implicit and unspoken aspects of organizations (Eberle & Maeder, 2011; Neyland, 2008; Yanow, 2012; Ybema, Yanow, Wels, & Kamsteeg, 2009).

Due to challenges associated with organizational ethnographies (Plankey-Videla, 2012), there are few studies that employ an organizational ethnographic approach to studying inter-organizational dynamics (Zilber, 2015), but the utility and value of the organizational ethnography to research within individual organizations can be applied to the inter-organizational space that is the subject of this research. The organizations studied are independent, yet within the research environment, they necessarily form a larger collective organization or community of practice. In this context, the individual organizations can be thought of as the departments within an individual organization that is the subject of other organizational ethnographies.

The applicability of the organizational ethnographic method to this inter-organizational research will be explored in the context of seven key characteristics described by Ybema, Yanow, Wels, and Kamsteeg (2009):

Combined fieldwork methods. This study used the combined fieldwork methods described by Ybema, Yanow, Wels, and Kamsteeg (2009) of "observing (with whatever degree of participation), conversing (including formal interviewing), and the close reading of documentary sources" (p. 6). All three of the methods are critical to a thorough study of the expressed and interpreted aspects of organizational culture and how those aspects may affect collaboration in real or perceived ways.

At the scene. The organizational ethnography provides a means to examine the complexities of organizational life as they occur. This aspect of the organizational ethnography is particularly essential to understand the interplay of organizational cultures and identities in the interagency environment. The political and executive calls for increased collaboration are often not realized at the operational and tactical level on a consistent basis. The ability of the organizational ethnographer to examine the "renderings of objects, actors, events, language, and interactions" (Ybema et al., 2009, p. 6) at the operational level can help illuminate why there is a disparity between executive intent and operational realization of consistent collaboration.

Hidden and harsh dimensions. There are numerous "hidden and harsh dimensions" (Ybema et al., 2009, p. 7) that are inherent in this type of research. Examination of interactions between organizational cultures will likely lay bare implicit attitudes and actions that are counter to policy calling for collaboration. Additionally,

competition for power and funding is often a hidden and unspoken aspect of interagency rivalry that may be present in the research environment that can be more easily navigated using the organizational ethnographic approach.

Context-sensitive and actor-centered analysis. The organizational ethnography is particularly valuable for scoping between the individual, group, and environment (Ybema et al., 2009). Collaboration is highly influenced by the operational environment, individuals, and organizations. The organizational ethnography does not divorce the various interdependent levels inherent in collaboration (Whelan, 2011).

Meaning-making. Organizational culture, or any culture, is demonstrated through a variety of means including how an organization interprets the external environment and conveys its purpose and meaning manifest through informal and formal mechanisms. The organizational ethnography is particularly well-suited to capturing the varied forms of sense-making present in an organization through combined methods, as previously described (Ybema et al., 2009).

Multivocality. The organizational ethnography is ideally suited for social research where there is significant "multivocality" (Ybema et al., p. 8). The fact that the organizations studied are all beholden to U.S. government policy, yet collaboration does not often occur in practice to the degree mandated in that same policy, is a testament to the multivocality of the research. There are the groups of voices critical to this research: (a) the voice of the U.S. government, (b) the voices of the organizations studied, (c) the voices of the individuals who are members of the organization.

Reflexivity and positionality. Finally, an organizational ethnographic approach is highly sensitive to reflexivity and positionality (Ybema et al., 2009). The approach recognizes that the researcher may have a role in shaping meaning (positionality) and therefore, must maintain a "heightened self-awareness – a 'reflexivity'" (Ybema et al., 2009, p. 9). As will be seen in the next section, reflexivity and positionality were key elements of this research due to my membership in one of the communities of interest.

Role of the Researcher

There are several aspects of my role as researcher, observer-participant, and professional ties to the communities of interest that warrant discussion. This section will address my role and bias associated with research. Understanding the role of the researcher and acknowledging any potential biases are essential aspects to any research, but these elements are especially critical in ethnographic research, such as this, where the researcher directly interacts with the research environment and communities studied (Neyland, 2008).

Role as Observer-Participant and Professional Relationship

I have had a role as a member of the Naval Special Warfare community for over 25 years as an active duty Naval Special Warfare Operator. As a result of this relationship and various assignments, I have had the opportunity to observe, within the context of my graduate work and this research, the communities of interest with full acceptance. Special Operations is a closed community in which membership must be earned under intense scrutiny (this itself has potential effects on outside collaboration). My access and

acceptance as an observer-participant and organizational ethnographer would not have been possible if I were not a member of the community.

The community and USSOCOM were made explicitly aware of my research, and it is something I can discuss openly with full support. Within USSOCOM, there is an acknowledgment of the need to research and develop more collaborative relationships with other government agencies, international partners, and NGOs. My research was received as a welcome effort, I did not face the issues of informed consent often associated with closed organizations (Plankey-Videla, 2012), and the only constraint was the requirement for me to submit my work for classification review which is a standard protocol (see *Classification Review* below).

I functioned as somewhat of a clandestine ethnographer during this research. My role and membership shielded me from many of the difficulties (e.g., negotiating position, relational difficulties) often faced by organizational ethnographers (Gilmore & Kenny, 2015). Due to the demands of my profession, those in leadership positions and colleagues who were made aware of my research did not dwell long on it, as there are always more pressing problems and concerns at hand. Nonetheless, the research was approached with a deliberately participative reflexivity (Mahadevan, 2011) whereby I was cognizant that, as a researcher and a member of SOF, even as I conducted this research it will also change me as a member of SOF.

Management of Researcher Bias

Management of researcher bias and self-reflexivity are critical elements of ethnographic research and can come with additional demands in the organizational

setting (Mahadevan, 2011). Additionally, power dynamics and emotion can be significant concerns for the organizational ethnographer, as they seek to balance between multiple roles in the research environment (Gilmore & Kenny, 2015). My connection to the research setting, one of the affected organizations (SOF), and knowledge of the premium currently placed on identifying means for more effective collaboration (as a self-critical and introspective inquiry) allowed me to position myself in a reasonably neutral position with respect to bias. The addition of individual perspectives to the methodology provided additional insurance against researcher bias.

Methodology

This research leveraged two distinct paths for data collection and analysis. The initial intent was to conduct the research solely using organizational literature and extrapolating key themes and language to answer the research questions through the illumination of themes and language present therein. However, the decision was made to incorporate individual perspectives of individuals from the organizations studied through article analysis. This contributes to the multivocality of the organizational ethnography and allows for a comparison with the findings from the bulk analysis of organizational literature and co-production of the organizational ethnography through the voices of the participants (Ybema et al., 2009).

Participant Selection Logic

The organizations selected for examination as part of this study were chosen using the focal area of U.S. organizations engaged in maritime stability operations in the Horn of Africa between the years 2010 and 2015 (Neyland, 2008). Emphasis has been placed

on the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) as the two organizations that conduct or sponsor most of the activity in the research environment. Both the articles selected as sources for data analysis and the participants for the individual perspective data were chosen or selected using these criteria.

Instrumentation

The only instrumentation used for this research is the participant biographical forms (Appendix E). These forms provide additional data points for comparison of the individual perspectives with the data gleaned from the analysis of organizational literature. Additionally, the inclusion of participant biographical data adds to the narrative dimension of the research (Eberle & Maeder, 2011) and will allow for an outsider perspective of the organizational identities involved.

Procedures for Recruitment

The participants for the study were recruited from individuals currently serving with one of the affected organizations in the Horn of Africa or who have served between 2010 and 2015. Recruitment was expected to be reasonably straight-forward due to my presence in the research environment and direct access to the affected organizations. Participants were solicited with the understanding that they would be participating in a study involving interpretation of language present in the literature about ongoing operations in the Horn of Africa. Three was the minimum number of individuals sought for participation in the study, with at least one participant each from the Department of State and U.S. DoD. Additional participants were included based on time available.

Procedures for Data Collection

The data for the text analysis was collected through database searches for articles on the stability efforts being carried out in the Horn of Africa. Each article was then be annotated based on the focus agency or organization (e.g., Department of State, U.S. DoD). The organizational literature was collected from sources and databases available to the general public and thus required no additional data use agreements. Using literature and perspectives from publicly available sources was critical from ethical and functional perspectives.

Data Analysis Plan

The data were analyzed using NVivo qualitative data analysis software developed by QSR International. The articles were imported to NVivo and coded based on the representative community (diplomatic, NGO, or military). The articles used for the participant perspectives were imported both as a separate data set and as part of the literature data set. Finally, the participant perspective themselves were transcribed (where required) and uploaded as a third data set. All three data sets were coded for recurring language and themes and word frequency. Word clouds were created for each unique set. The data sets were analyzed separately as well as together to add redundancy and contribute to the overall trustworthiness of the research.

Issues of Trustworthiness

There are several design elements of the research expressly incorporated to contribute to the overall trustworthiness of the research. Authenticity is a critical dimension of organizational ethnography (Neyland, 2008). While authenticity is most

closely related to credibility, in the organizational ethnographic method, authenticity refers to the access the researcher has to the organization and environment studied. This aspect of trustworthiness was answered in the previous section on the researcher's role. Additional aspects of an organizational ethnography include plausibility and criticality; these elements will be discussed in the context of credibility.

Credibility

The credibility of the study is bolstered by my own prolonged contact with the studied organizations. The research was conducted while on a six-month deployment to the Horn of Africa, working directly with the affected organizations and very much in the research environment. The plausibility of the research is established by the need for interagency collaboration, as evidenced by the discussion and sources in Chapters 1 and 2, which demonstrate significant demand for continued understanding of exactly how the studied organizations can best effect repeatable and consistent collaboration. The criticality aspect of ethnographic credibility is buttressed by the fact that calls for collaboration span all the organizations studied, and the issues associated with collaboration persist beyond the research environment.

Transferability

Though this study was limited to the environment of stability operations in the Horn of Africa, it is expected that the answers to the research questions are pervasive outside of the research environment. The delimitation of studying only those organizations involved in operations in the Horn of Africa was done for two reasons. First, it focuses the study on an area of enduring engagement in a wicked problem.

Second, studying only those organizations and organizational literature from the Horn of Africa allowed for a manageable population. It is expected that the research will be transferable to some degree (such as other areas of persistent interagency action) since it is an organizational culture that is being studied rather than processes specific to the Horn of Africa. However, the research may not be transferable to emergent situations where the organizational actors have not had an extended period working in context with each other, as is the case in the Horn of Africa.

Dependability

The use of three sets of data (bulk organizational literature, participant selected articles, and participant perceptions) is a significant contribution to the dependability of the study. The straight forward analysis of organizational literature alone would not provide a very high level of dependability. However, the addition of the outsider perspective (participant interpretation of articles associated with the other organization), and article selection add two additional dimensions to the study that increase the dependability through triangulation. Finally, the researcher's reflexivity as a participant in an affected organization, and in the research environment, adds an additional dimension if managed and adequately documented.

Confirmability

Researcher honesty and reflexivity is the most critical aspect of confirmability for this organizational ethnography. Additionally, the study focused on elements of organizational culture, both projected and perceived, and as such bias itself is a key component of the study. The exposure of any implicit assumptions, narrative provided by

the organizational and individual identities and interpretations, and disparities between interpretations of articles are critical elements of this organizational ethnography.

Ethical Procedures

There are a variety of ethical considerations that must be addressed with any research effort. This research was sculpted to first eliminate any additional ethical considerations through careful design and selection of data sources. The use of organizational literature and articles and interpretation for data not only provides a valuable dimension to the study, but also alleviated concerns that might otherwise be problematic with direct interviews that might solicit erroneous responses for fear of reprisal, or which might cause reprisals. Additionally, the research focuses on an area of policy that is a concern to all organizations involved, and all aspects are explained to the participants prior to participation.

The sensitive and ongoing nature of the area of study, and the continued service of many professionals in that area, did require some additional precautions to ensure support by the affected organization. Some additional steps, such as classification review, were critical not only for my own protection but also to ensure that the final product is ready for consumption by the affected organizations. Submission of the dissertation sections for classification review, and treatment of data will be covered in the remainder of this chapter.

Agreements to Gain Access to Data

The use of existing organizational literature eliminates the need for informed consent with respect to access to data. However, consent to the DoD classification review

process is a specified condition of my access to data and the communities of interest as a result of my employment by the U.S. government. The ongoing classification review of the dissertation sections was critical to receiving the support of the relevant organizations.

Classification Review

This work has been submitted to the appropriate Department of Defense (DoD) representatives for classification review at regular intervals throughout its development in accordance with *DoD Manual 5200.01-V1: DoD Information Security Program* (DoD, 2012a). Submission for classification review is a legal obligation resulting from my status as an active-duty member of the U.S. Navy. In any instance where the classification review authority recommended changes, the changes did not affect the overall content or findings of the research.

Treatment of Data

The participant aspects of the study were intentionally designed so that there is no attribution to the participant aspects of the research. Names and specific positions of individual participants are not included in the biographical information collected, nor are names tied to the article selections or interpretations. The anonymity of the participants allows for participation in the study without fear of reprisal but also alleviates any operational security concerns that might arise from associating individuals with operations in the Horn of Africa.

Summary

This study investigated the impact of organizational culture on interagency collaboration in the Horn of Africa by using a qualitative organizational ethnographic method. Triangulation was accomplished through several distinct data sources: bulk organizational literature analysis, participant article selection and review, and the researcher's reflexivity and presence in the research environment. The study relied on the seven key characteristics of organizational ethnographies as a framework for addressing the author's presence in the research setting, association with the affected organizations, and to answer issues of trustworthiness. Both the method chosen, and additional procedures shaped a credible study that hopefully makes a valuable contribution to the body of knowledge on boundary spanning and collaboration.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative organizational ethnography was to examine the role of organizational culture and identity in U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF) and interagency networks and collaborative maritime stability and security efforts in the Horn of Africa. This study was developed to explore and describe the interplay of organizational culture and collaboration in the interagency environment through both individual and organizational perspectives. The research questions were:

Research Question 1: Are ideological consensus and positive evaluations of external organizations communicated and present and/or absent in organizational literature associated with Special Operations and other U.S. government organizations/agencies?

Research Question 2: How are the cultural and normative aspects of organizational identity present in the organizational literature interpreted by members of external organizations?

This chapter is organized to provide information on the research setting, including organizational conditions that may have influenced the research; presents the participant demographics; describes the data collection methods and handling of data; describes the coding the theming process; examine and describe evidence of trustworthiness; and, presents and summarizes the data and findings in the context of the research questions.

Setting

The setting for the study was U.S. efforts and interagency (SOF and Department of State [DoS]) collaboration in East Africa to promote stability, good governance, and

the rule of law. Both organizations have significant numbers of personnel and resources stationed in Camp Lemmonier, Djibouti City, Djibouti and Nairobi, Kenya focused on stability in the region, including within the country of Somalia (United States Africa Command, 2015). There were no evident personal conditions that influenced the participants or their experience at the time that may have influenced the interpretation of the study results. All participants were actively and voluntary engaged in the area of inquiry; interactions were conducted in private venues available to both the researcher and participants; participation was free from coercion. Additionally, the researcher proactively managed any potential conflict of interests, the research was separate from the researcher's professional role, and the researcher made clear there was no professional association or ramifications associated with the research.

The Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for the study required additional documentation from the DoD to ensure that the research did not constitute government-supported research as defined in DoD Instruction 3216.02: Protection of Human Subjects and Adherence to Ethical Standards in DoD-Supported Research (DoD, 2011). The review of the use of common facilities on the DoD installation was conducted by the competent authority; this satisfied the IRB requirements and approval was received on August 23, 2017, with Walden IRB approval number 08-23-17-0283800.

Personal Conditions

Reflexivity is an integral part of the ethnographic tradition and no less so in organizational ethnography. I experienced two personal events that significantly

influenced his perspective and the timeline associated with data analysis. During initial data collection (October 2017), I received unexpected permanent change of station orders for assignment to the Joint Special Operations University (JSOU) in Tampa, Florida, to serve as active-duty faculty. As faculty at JSOU, I taught topics related to the national strategic framework; joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational (JIIM) cooperation and collaboration, communication and leadership, and special operations theory.

This change of assignment provided me with additional context, mainly through the development of my own understanding of the national strategic framework and policy space. The faculty assignment put me in close contact with other faculty and researchers examining problems in related spaces, enabled personal discussions with leading thinkers on complexity, and I participated in academic panels that contributed to increased reflexivity. I spent much more time with the data than anticipated and iterated through the analysis process filling personal research journals as I integrated the organizational and individual perspectives and sketched out how to best convey the emerging insights in the context of the most recent developments in the subject organizations.

This professional context provided me with a renewed appreciation for the importance and relevance of the research topic, which motivated me to continue working through the data in the interest of gaining as much value from the research as possible. I gained a deep appreciation for the "reflexivity and positionality" (Ybema et al., 2009, p. 9) as key characteristics associated with the generation of ethnographic knowledge. Though this contributed significant time to the analysis, the added time contributed to the

quality and relevance of the research. This was ultimately a positive development and will be discussed further as part of *Evidence of Trustworthiness* in this chapter, as well as in Chapter 5.

Organizational Conditions

There were several ongoing organizational conditions that warrant mention. The change of U.S. administration subsequent to the 2016 U.S. national elections did have significant potential organizational effects for the studied organizations (DoS, DoD, and SOF). The incoming administration aggressively implemented a strategy of reorganization at DoS under Secretary Tillerson and during the summer of 2017 there was an effort by the new administration to make significant cuts to the DoS budget for fiscal year (FY) 2018 (Review of the FY 2018 State Department Budget Request, 2017). This effort produced an exodus of senior DoS personnel, press coverage, and public debate, which included the Secretary of Defense (retired General James Mattis) who aggressively defended the legitimacy of the DoS in congressional testimony during his confirmation hearing (Confirmation Hearing – Mattis, 2017).

Ultimately, the DoS budget was preserved for the fiscal year 2018, though Secretary Tillerson's efforts to reduce bureaucracy within the Department created considerable stress and controversy (Luce & Gramer, 2017). This organizational condition and reality were acknowledged and discussed by all DoS participants in the study but did not influence the interpretation of the study results. On the contrary, this organizational condition provided valuable context insights directly pertaining to the

purpose of the study and its continued relevance; this will be further explained in the analysis and findings.

Demographics

The study relied on two sources of data: organizational literature and semi-structured interviews. The organizational literature, including publicly available congressional testimony, used was taken from the period of 2010-2016. Similarly, all participants were active members of their organizations (either DoS or SOF) and had served in professional capacities with those organizations in the Horn of Africa between 2010 and 2016. There were three participants from the DoS and four from SOF. Subordinates of the researcher were explicitly excluded from participation to prevent any ethical concerns resulting from the research overlap with the researcher's professional role in the area of inquiry. Participants provided only the information requested on the Participant Biographical/Experience Questionnaire approved by Walden University's IRB (see Appendix E).

Information collected included the employees affiliated government organization, length of employment with that organization, experience with other government organizations or agencies, total years of government service, and experience working with the other organizations of interest (e.g., experienced working with the military if a DoS employee); total years of government service; and frequency working with other organizations (see Appendix E). An additional background question was asked concerning the time period of participant involvement in East Africa; however, this data was collected only to confirm participant selection criteria and inclusion of any greater

specificity, beyond the 2010-2016 timeframe, is irrelevant and has been omitted to ensure the anonymity of the participants. Similarly, the positions of the participants have not been included in the study or otherwise recorded.

The participants were all mid- to senior-level employees in their respective organizations and engaged in the operational and strategic levels of U.S. policy. However, each having risen through the ranks of their respective organizations and served at lower levels. The participant with the least total time in government service was 16 years, the most was 32 years (two participants), and the average was 19.7 years. All participants had significant experience working with the other U.S. government organization of interest (e.g., working with DoD if a DoS employee). Other demographic information such as race, age, or gender was not collected or relevant to this particular study.

Data Collection

Data collection consisted of two types: organizational literature to examine communicated ideological consensus and evaluations of external organizations (RQ1); and semi-structured interviews to explore the cultural and normative aspects of organizational identity (RQ2). A majority of the data collection and semi-structured interviews were completed in the fall and winter of 2017 with three additional interviews of opportunity with high-level SOF and DoS personnel conducted in the spring and early summer of 2018. There were no deviations from the collection procedures outlined in Chapter 3. The data collection methods for the organizational literature and semi-

structured interviews will be discussed separately to increase clarity and better describe the relevant aspects of each.

Primary Research: Organizational Literature

The organizational literature was collected from sources and databases available to the general public and thus required no additional data use agreements. Using literature and perspectives from publicly available sources was critical from ethical and functional perspectives. The use of publicly available sources served to clearly separate the collection of data from the researcher's role and prevent even the appearance of privileged access or a conflict of interest resulting from the researcher's separate occupational role as an active duty SOF professional. The use of publicly available information also prevented any potential classification issues or unintentional exposure to internal deliberations or views.

The use of publicly available information served deliberate functional and theoretical purposes, given the importance of multivocality in organizational ethnography and the role of organizational literature as shaping and curating mechanism (Erlandson, 2014; Langan-Fox & Cooper, 2014). Professional members of the studied organizations often review available literature of adjacent organizations (e.g., SOF and DoS), so this was a critical component of the interplay and meaning-making between the two organizations and their respective professional members. The publicly available information thus serves to influence and shape the perceptions of collaborative partners, in addition to its own members (Erlandson, 2014).

Literature collected was from the national strategic level (from which both studied organizations take direction), the Department of Defense, the Department of State, as well as the functional (i.e., counterterrorism Bureau of DoS and Special Operations Command in DoD) and geographic (i.e., Africa Bureau with DoS and Africa Command with DoD) components of each organization. As a point of commonality between DoS and DoD/SOF, the national strategic literature and policy provided a venue for the potential identification of superordinate and aspirational goals and were an essential part of the data set. Additionally, issues of the SOF and DoS professional journals (*Tip of the Spear* and *State Mag*) from the study timeframe (2010-2016) were incorporated as an essential part of the multivocality and hidden dimensions necessary for the study. Table 1 displays the primary sources of data collection for the organizational literature and the type of data harvested.

Table 1

Primary Sources of Organizational Literature

Database	Type of Data
www.whitehouse.gov	National Security Strategy
www.jcs.mil	Joint DoD strategy, doctrine, and concepts
www.dvidshub.net	*Tip of Spear*
www.state.gov	Assessments, speeches, and *State Mag*
www.socom.mil	All SOF literature
www.foreign.senate.gov	DoD and SOF Testimony
www.armed-services.senate.gov	DoS and USAID Testimony

The collection of organizational literature began with IRB approval in August 2017 and continued, in intervals, through July 2018. The core literature from the years 2010-2016 that formed the primary research was collected within the first month subsequent to IRB approval and consisted of 8,258 pages of information. As the data analysis was conducted, additional DoD references were incorporated to frame the study in the context of the current environment and contribute to the increased relevance of the analysis and findings; however, this set was kept separate from the core literature. This will be further explained in the *Data Analysis* and *Results* sections of this chapter and was the only deviation from the one-month anticipated for the research involving the organizational literature; nonetheless, the time spent on this portion of data collection was cumulatively well under a month total. All organizational literature collected for the study was available in the electronic *portable document format* (.pdf). There were no unusual circumstances encountered during the collection of the organizational literature.

Secondary Research: Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a total of seven purposefully sampled participants. The participants consisted of three DoS professionals and four SOF professionals. All seven participants were identified in November 2017, and four interviews were conducted between November 21 and December 18, 2017. Three additional interviews were delayed due to scheduling issues and took place in the spring (March) and summer (June) of 2018. However, even though the minimum number of participants had already been met, the perspectives offered by the three interviews in

2018 contributed significantly to the ethnographic approach and multivocality of the study.

All participants signed a consent form, were provided a copy of the consent form, and were informed that the research was being conducted outside the scope of the researcher's official duties as an active-duty member of the U.S. Navy and the SOF community and was 100% voluntary. Five of the seven participants were known to the researcher, and the remaining two were referred to the researcher by individuals interested in participating but who did not meet the purposeful sampling criteria. All data collection was completed by July 8, 2018, and no identifying information was contained in, or otherwise commingled with, the data from the semi-structured interviews.

Four interviews were conducted in person on the MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Florida, and three interviews were conducted over the phone. The face-to-face interviews were conducted using private collaboration rooms available for use by both the participants and researcher on MacDill; these rooms were scheduled by the researcher but did not require any special accommodation other than the access already enjoyed by both the participants and research (see comments in the section on *Setting* in this chapter). Three additional interviews were conducted over the phone. All interviews were conducted without interruption, and each participant was only interviewed once.

A total of 525 minutes (8-hours and 45 minutes) of semi-structured interviews were conducted; this does not include the time spent identifying and recruiting participants, scheduling, providing informed consent, and feedback opportunities. The shortest semi-structured interview was 48 minutes, and the longest was 130 minutes. Six

were under the target time of one hour (48, 52, 57, and 58 minutes), and two were over but under the scheduled time of two hours (80 & 100 minutes), and a third was 10 minutes over the scheduled time (130 minutes). In the three instances in which the semi-structured interviews ran longer than one hour, the researcher had covered the key aspects of the semi-structured interview instrument and allowed enough time to appropriately close the interview with review of informed consent, member check, and contact information. However, in all three cases, the participants stated they were enjoying the topic and dialogue and voluntarily continued the interview.

Recording and treatment of the data. The researcher initially planned to obtain participant consent to record the interviews using a digital voice recorder. However, the researcher determined that recording the interviews could prove problematic for the handling of the data and prevent some participants from engaging in the honest and reflective dialogue necessary for the research. The researcher made the decision to eschew the use of the digital recorder and rely solely on hand-written notes to capture the participant responses and themes during the semi-structured interviews. This also provided consistency across the seven semi-structured interviews.

Ultimately, the decision to rely on hand-written notes was prudent; several times during interviews, participants referred to themselves, to me, their positions or responsibilities, or other individuals in a manner that would have posed problems and additional issues with handling and identifying information had the interviews been recorded. I was able to avoid this issue through detailed notes and sensitivity to those issues during the interview. Notes on interview content contained only an indication of

the organizational affiliation of the participant (i.e., DoS or SOF) and were thus de-identified at the point of collection.

All data was scanned and transcribed from handwritten notes into electronic files by those same two categories (DoS or SOF). The nature of the research and purposeful sampling method did not require any further coding (e.g., by specific individuals using an alias). The hand-written notes were shredded once scanning and transcription were complete. The raw data (notes) from the interviews were stored using the 256-bit Advanced Encryption Standard (AES), and a thorough review was conducted to ensure that there was no identifying information present. There were no variations in data collection from the plan presented in Chapter 3.

Unusual circumstances encountered. There were initially 13 prospective participants, six were unable to participate as follows: two did not meet the purposeful sampling criteria for the study; two ultimately decided not to participate; two had scheduling issues that proved insurmountable. The nature of the SOF community presented unique challenges to the recruitment of participants for the study. Though the researcher somewhat anticipated this (it was a factor in the decision to forego the use of the digital recorder), it was, in itself, a fascinating cultural factor. Participants from DoS were much easier to recruit and more open, whereas the SOF participants were much more guarded. This was not entirely surprising and will be discussed further in the Results as a relevant component of the respective cultures.

Data Analysis

Data analysis began with an initial examination, classification, and coding of 8,258 pages organizational literature prior to beginning the semi-structured interviews and subsequent incorporation of that secondary data set. This was an important step to understand the inter-organizational space (Zilbner, 2014). However, the data analysis process was only linear with respect to the first iteration and transition from the initial analysis of one data set to the next. Coding was followed by pattern matching, exploratory explanations, examination, the development of themes and descriptions, then repeating the process. Each iteration moving back and forth between the sets of data yielded new insights in an organic, inductive, and emergent process that necessarily defied any preconceived structure beyond the frames of ideological consensus and evaluations of external organizations.

Data analysis was primarily conducted using tools present in the NVivo qualitative data analysis (QDA) software; the analysis began using NVivo 11 and ended with NVivo 12 after an update became available early in the summer of 2018. However, my research journals also provided an important venue for the process of the unfolding "conversations" between data, meaning-making, and my own reflexivity. This process turned out to be much longer than anticipated as new hidden dimensions revealed themselves. The iterative process is explained here with an attempt to capture the process as it unfolded beginning with the initial open-coding of the organizational literature to identify actors (the organizations), progressing through selective coding, incorporation and coding of the participant perspectives, pattern matching, exploratory explanations

and examination, developing composite descriptions, and repeating the process (Figure 1).

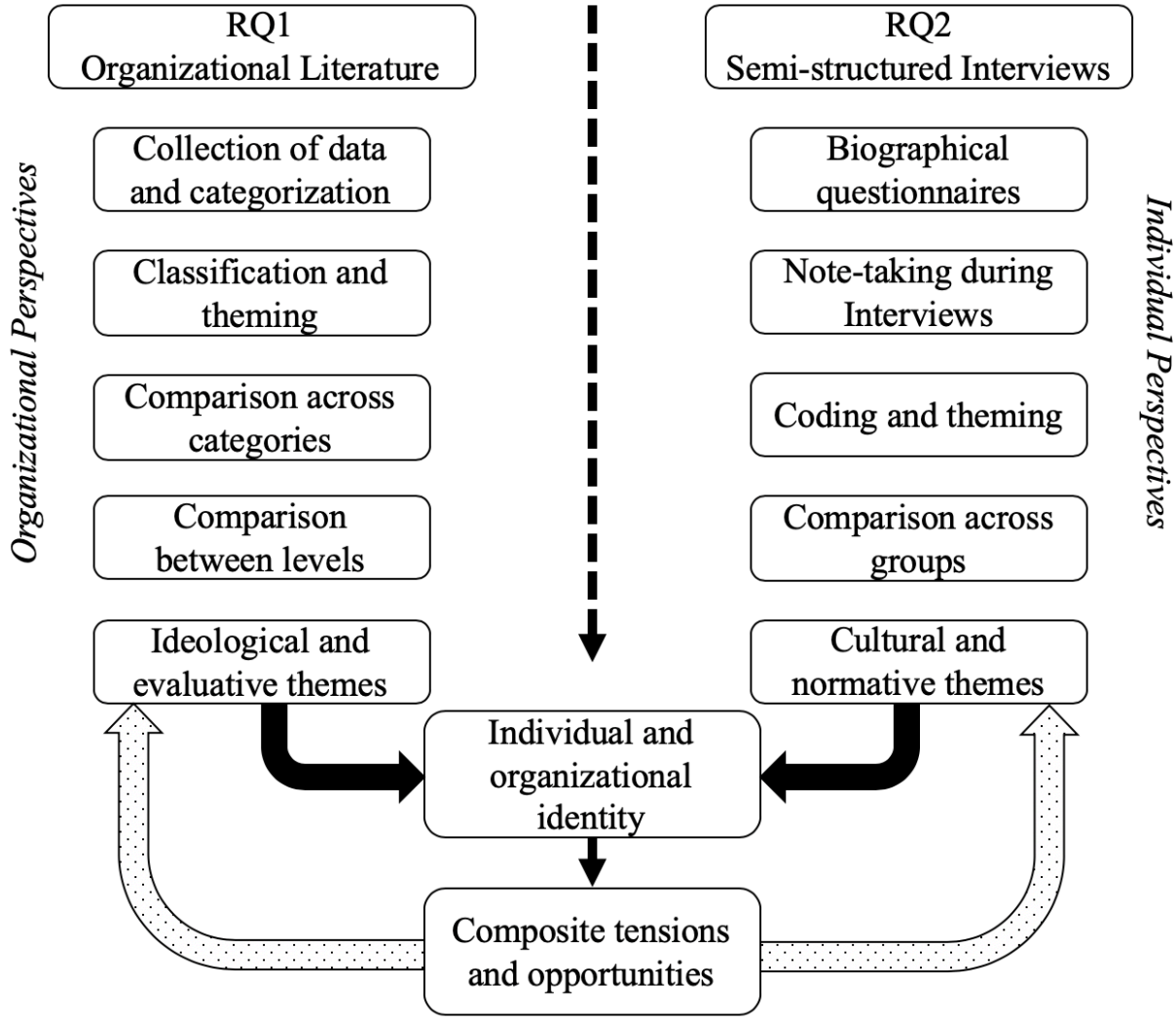

Figure 1. Iterative process for data analysis.

Organizational Literature

The core organizational literature was approached with the purpose of conceptualizing the inter-organizational space (Zilber, 2014). As literature was collected, it was initially classified solely by the source organization (DoS, DoD, or SOF), but it

quickly became apparent that more distinction was necessary to have any hope of uncovering hidden dimensions. Different levels and functions of the organizations existed as organizations and communities within the organizations. Initial attempts to stratify the literature using the traditional levels of strategic, operational, and tactical were insufficient, and this decidedly military paradigm was inadequate for the study.

Open coding and classification.

Considerable time was spent developing an open-coding structure that helped identify boundaries in the organizational literature based on the questions of who, why, and where. Ultimately, five levels of "where" were chosen for the literature: national, strategic, functional, geographic, and professional; with the intent that the semi-structured interviews would form an additional, sixth, location: individual (related to, but separate from the professional location in the literature). Similarly, as initially suspected, the "who" required a further break-down of organizations within the larger organizations. So, while DoS and USSOCOM can be examined at the professional level, they both exist in larger organizational contexts, which include other manifestations including functional and geographic components of each.

The question of "why" could be taken in a variety of directions. Ultimately, as the study is concerned with culture is seemed appropriate to classify the purpose of the literature based on the orientation of the communication. Combining an assignment of external or internal orientation to the literature provided useful means to uncover additional voices of the organization in the context of discourse and practice. The strategic and national literature was uniquely classified with both external and internal

dimensions, as it at once serves to provide strategic direction to lower levels of an organization as well as communicate intent to and shape the perceptions of external actors (e.g., the American public and other countries) (Figure 2).

Level	Organization	Orientation	Source
National	White House	External & Internal	National Security Strategy
Strategic	DoD	External & Internal	NMS / NDS
			QDR
	DoS	External & Internal	Strategic Plans
			QDDR
Functional	USSOCOM	External	Congressional Testimony
		Internal	Narrative & Operating Concepts
	DoS Bureaus	External	Congressional Testimony
		Internal	Counter Violent Extremism
Geographic	USAFRICOM	External	Congressional Testimony
	DoS Africa Bureau	External	
Professional	USSOCOM	Internal	"Tip of the Spear"
	DoS	Internal	"State Mag"

Figure 2. Classification of organizational literature by organization, level, and orientation.

The data was examined using different cases that compared and analyzed the literature from the same organization at different levels (e.g., DoS Africa Bureau and DoS Strategic); between organizations at the same level (e.g., USAFRICOM and DoS Africa); then also making comparisons between those cases. Selective coding of organizational culture emerged through this process and was able to be validated through comparison across the different classifications and cases. The participant interviews were coded at the individual level, which is simultaneously external and internal in orientation and adjacent to the professional level in Figure 2.

The ideological elements manifest as both cultural and structural themes present in the organizational literature. The cultural elements were themed using Groysberg, Lee, Price, and Cheng's (2018) eight culture styles: caring, purpose, learning, enjoyment, results, authority, safety, and order. These styles are organized along two intersecting axes that correspond to how people respond to change (which ranges from stability to flexibility) and how people interact (ranging from independence to interdependence) (Groysberg, Lee, Price, & Change, 2018).

The semi-structured interviews provided critical validation of the themes that had emerged in the independent analysis of the organizational literature. The interviews were analyzed and coded, then integrated and compared within the adjacent organizational context to provide the multivocality critical to the ethnographic approach (Ybema et al., 2009). At all levels (organizational to the individual), the inter-organizational space was examined for potential boundary objects that might provide avenues for increased collaboration, as well as those areas were the ideological, evaluative, cultural, and/or normative aspects of each are likely to be causes of friction and challenges to collaboration. The iterative analysis resulted in the final themes, categories, and codes for each data set displayed in Table 2 through Table 5 below. Final analysis and comparison across organizations and through all levels were then used to develop the composite description contained in the results section below (Figure 4).

Table 2

DoD and SOF Organizational Literature

Code	Category	Theme	Examples
Ideological	Structural	Authority & Order	Joint doctrine hierarchy Highly stratified organization
	Cultural	Results Driven	Emphasis on budget justification Measuring effects Return on investment Focus on end states
		Prescriptive	Ways and means Application of capability to problems
Evaluative	Cultural	Utilitarian	External organizations as means and the need to "exploit relations" Collaboration as task
		Internal Focus	Focus on organizational history, operations, and awards

Table 3

DoS Organizational Literature

Code	Category	Theme	Examples
Ideological	Structural	Flexibility & Purpose	Speeches and talks Negotiation Long-term
	Cultural	Purpose	Understanding Sustainability Greater causes Development
		Descriptive	Ideals and Values Opportunities Shared future
Evaluative	Cultural	Idealistic	Opportunities Collaboration as task
		External Focus	Multivocality First person

Table 4

SOF Perspectives

Prompt	Codes & Categories	Themes
2.a.	Attraction to Organization *Military family* *Sense of Service* *Part of organization that relies on talent*	Membership & Service
2.b.	Experience in SOF *Making a difference* *Among trusted people* *Consistently challenging* *Fantastic*	Self-efficacy
2.c.	Impact of work *Solving problems* *Able to engage directly with problems* *Self-efficacy* *Ability to have an impact*	Problem Solving Direct Engagement
3.a.	Experience with external organizations *Very negative; lack of presence* *Lack of representation* *Different perspectives*	Overmatch
3.b.	Relationship with external stakeholders *Highly political* *Political theater* *Strained and lots of friction* *Politics contribute to different risk perspectives*	Clash of Cultures

(*table continues)*

Prompt	Codes & Categories	Themes
3.c.	Typical external interactions	
	Delay awaiting perfection	
	Bureaucratic sabotage	Politics
	Not very personal	
4	Impression of literature	
	Overly aspirational	
	No measures of effect	Idealistic
	Unrealistic	
	Lack clear direction	
	Disconnect between stated policy and actions	Descriptive
	Ambiguous, laden with disclaimers	
	Too broad	

Table 5

DoS Perspectives

Prompt	Codes and Categories	Themes
2.a.	Attraction to Organization *Enjoyed other cultures* *Be involved in the world* *Helping people* *Opportunity to learn*	Engagement / External
2.b.	Experience in DOS *Great, fun, and interesting* *Thrown into jobs; not much training* *Fair amount of ego* *Smartest people in the room*	Learning
2.c.	Impact of work *Standing up for what's right* *Being part of history* *What our country represents*	Service / Self-efficacy
3.a.	Experience with external organizations *SOF gets ahead of everyone else* *Disconnect between DoD policies* *Constantly planning*	Timing
3.b.	Relationship with external stakeholders *Coordination difficult* *Too many chains of command* *Difficult to understand actors*	Clash of Culture

(*table continues*)

Prompt	Codes and Categories	Themes
3.c.	Typical external interactions *Like a foreign country* *Dizzying landscape of communication* *Staff overmatch*	Overmatch
4	Impression of literature *Focus on "end states"* *Promoting versus deterring* *Templated solutions self-contradictory*	Utilitarian / Results

Qualities of Discrepant Cases

Finally, since the period covered by the original data set (2010-2016) occurred entirely under the Obama administration, more recent organizational literature (2017 and early 2018) from all classifications was analyzed and compared against the existing data set and themes. The more recent literature was used to ensure the forward relevance and momentum, as opposed to the backward look that documents might provide from the Bush administration (though they could ostensibly serve the same purpose). This data provided a discrepant case to see if the ideological, evaluative, and cultural and normative themes remained consistent within the organizations of interest, despite the change of administration in January 2017. The were no significant differences found in the more recent literature. However, in 2018, the DoD produced the *Joint Concept for Integrated Campaigning* (DoD, 2018), which offers a new appreciation of the collaboration space; this document will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Authenticity is a key component of organizational ethnographies in which the perspectives of individuals, and in this case, the identities and culture of the organizations, are inherently part of the phenomenon that is being explored. I was immersed in the problem, and this was not a fly-in and fly-out ethnography. During the course of the study, the topic of this research continued to remain a priority research topic for SOF, and I remain involved and knowledgeable on the issue through my professional capacity. I felt a significant sense of responsibility to the research throughout the process and humbled that the research would likely be read and used by organizations involved in problems of significant consequence; this sense of purpose and gravity propelled much more time with the data and reflection. Research journals facilitated my own reflexivity as I navigated the research and the three operational deployments I conducted during that time.

Credibility strategies were implemented, as described in Chapter 3. The research used only authoritative official organizational and professional literature, and all participants were professional members of their respective organizations (U.S. Special Operations Command and the U.S. Department of State). All participants remain in active service, and several from both organizations currently hold critical executive leadership positions. Common themes arose in both the organizational literature and the participant interviews that indicate a high degree of transferability.

Few of the perspectives were constrained simply to the literature or participant perspectives associated with maritime stability in the Horn of Africa (HoA). Though

HoA provided valuable context and focus for the study, both aspects of the study revealed recurrent themes that were unconstrained by the scope of the research. The elements of organizational culture do not appear to be constrained to any specific operational environment. The use of organizational literature and participant semi-structured interviews coupled with the independent and comparative analysis contributed heavily to the dependability.

Throughout the research, the literature, participants, and cross-organizational served as a triangulation mechanism for the themes and meaning that emerged. Similarly, confirmability was bolstered through multiple iterations of analysis, participant member checks, and the use of policy documents outside the scope of the study in an attempt to identify discrepant cases. The consistent application of these criteria throughout the research produced useful results that were coherent and consistent within the system.

Results

The research questions focused on ideological consensus and positive evaluations of external organizations in the organizational literature (research question one) and the cultural and normative aspects of organizational identity as interpreted by the participants (research question two). As described in the data analysis, these two components were complementary and designed to develop a composite understanding of the organizational and inter-organizational space from the highest organizational levels to the individual level and contact layer (SOF Professional and DoS Foreign Service Officer). The results of the study are organized by the level of the organization beginning at the top (DoD and DoS) and moving to the individual level. This provides the most coherent manner to

present the results and the interplay between the organizations and across levels. This section will conclude with a summary and graphic depiction of the composite results (Figure 4).

Organizational Level

At the organizational level, the DoD displays a culture of order and hierarchy, the external environment emphasizes combatting threats which are binned within taxonomies of warfare, and both the literature and testimony are dominated by discussions of requirements, resources, and capabilities. The DoS literature at this level displays a culture of purpose that discusses the advancement of goals, the promotion of ideals, and emphasizes sustainability. The DoS were discussing *confronting* challenges and *advancing* interests, whereas the DoD literature places a premium on *combatting* and *defeating* threats. It is important to note that this divergence was immediately apparent at the highest levels of the organizations and directly adjacent to the *National Security Strategy* that is the top policy document for both organizations.

At this level, the juxtaposition of the DoD culture of order and categorization with the DoS culture of purpose and understanding extends beyond the themes present in the literature and testimony alone. The congressional testimony and posture statements of the DoS, DoD, and SOF offered valuable insights as a result of *who* conveyed that information before the respective committees of Congress. The DoD and SOF presentations were made almost exclusively by the military leadership and civilian appointees (e.g., the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict). However, the DoS testimony, whether delivered by a geographic

bureau or a functional bureau, included outside members from academia or other organizations such as non-governmental organizations to develop an understanding of the policy space. These different approaches cascade or *feed-forward* to the group level, where they manifest as a difference between the prescriptive and descriptive approaches of DoD / SOF and DoS; this was evident in the literature and noted by the participants.

Group Level

At the group level, the DoD and SOF literature highlights both significant ideological, structural, evaluative, and cultural differences in each organization. The DoD literature is loaded with doctrine and taxonomies of warfare (e.g., Irregular Warfare), a prescriptive approach focused on ends, ways, and means and achieving results. The Joint Doctrine Hierarchy (Figure 3) provides a good visualization of the prescriptive and results-based aspects of the DoD culture.

The DoD findings are contrasted by the more descriptive approach characterized in the DoS literature. The DoS literature is full of narratives and speeches, as opposed to doctrine, marked by a greater emphasis on engagement, understanding, and collaboration. The group-level perspectives at DoS are more bottom-up and rely on feedback from the professionals in the field while the DoD group level is oriented toward feedforward and the imposition of prescriptive frameworks for action.

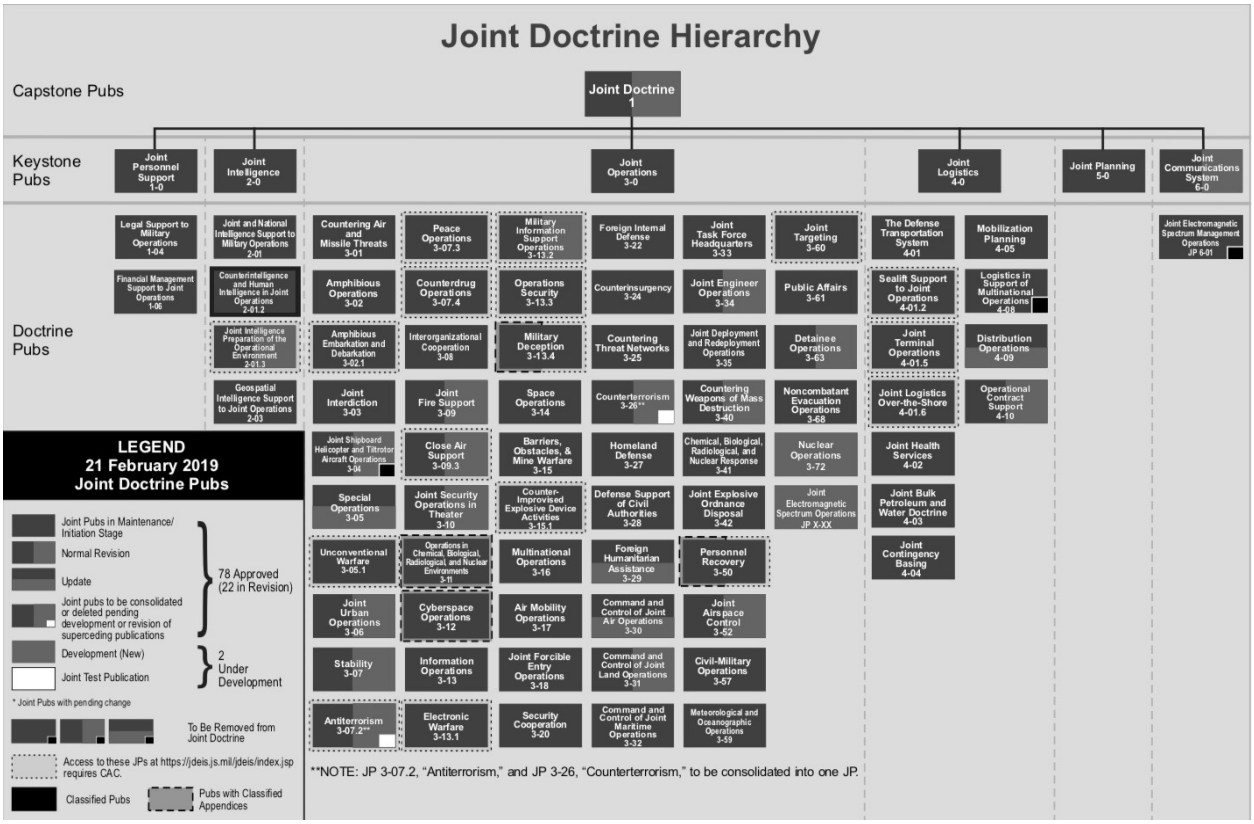

Figure 3. The Joint Doctrine Hierarchy (DoD, 2019).

Within the DoD literature, there are positive evaluations of external organizations, but they are presented in the utilitarian language of *ways* and *means*. The *Special Operations Forces Interagency Counterterrorism Reference Manual* is designed "as a quick reference document for counterterrorism professional throughout the interagency" (Joint Special Operations University, 2011 & 2013, p. 3-1). However, despite the stated purpose of the manual, when discussing the need to coordinate with partner nations, intergovernmental organizations, and non-governmental organizations, the manual notes that "differences are inevitable and, one could argue, helpful if properly exploited" (Joint Special Operations University, 2011 & 2013, p. 3-1). The usage of the word *exploit* in the group level literature reinforces this utilitarian perspective. When the word *exploit*

appears in the DoS literature, it follows the form (bad actor) exploits (thing) for (bad purpose), whereas the use of the word in the DoD and SOF literature is used as a neutral verb frequently agnostic to the nature of the subject or desired outcome.

The group findings in the analysis literature were echoed by the participant perspectives. The DoS participants bemoaned the dizzying chains of command, self-contradictory template responses, the sheer size of DoD (referred to as "staff overmatch" by two participants), and the DoD obsession with end states emanating from the group level of DoD. A DoS participant remarked that "military documents are permeated with templated 'one-size-fits-all' tendency" that is "self-contradictory to the stated understanding of the environment." Similarly, the DoD participants viewed the group level of DoS as overly political, ambiguous, idealistic, and unrealistic. These themes were explored in detail at the individual level.

Individual Level

The semi-structured interviews and individual perspectives were critical to laying bare the hidden and harsh dimensions so crucial to understanding the dynamics among actors within and across organizations (Ybema, et al., 2009). The participant perspectives illuminated subtleties in the literature and gave voice to the meaning-making and meaning-taking that occurs at the boundary between the organizations. This highlighted both challenges and opportunities for increased collaboration and boundary spanning.

A *culture of service* became a bright boundary object at the lower group and individual levels of the military and State literature. Service was a consistent theme across all participants, the locus of that theme differed by an internal or external

orientation. The military participants spoke of service to the organization, whereas the State participants derived their sense of service from the world. The internal versus external derivation of service was also reflected in the professional literature; the SOF magazine, *Tip of the Spear,* almost exclusively focused on accomplishments of the organizations, awards, history and operations while the DoS magazine, *State Mag*, was filled with a greater diversity of stories about experiences, foreign cultures, and personal reflection.

The DoS participants noted issues of *staff overmatch,* and this was tied directly with the military directive for collaboration, as the participants described multitudes of military members conducting office calls without clear purpose beyond the coordination itself. This is connected to the themes that emerged in the organizational and group levels and the military's utilitarian perspective of *ways and means*. This was a revealing and paradoxical association with significant implications for practical application that will be discussed in Chapter 5.

While both groups discussed the importance of collaboration, particularly the value of Special Operations and DoS collaboration, the military members reflected similar themes as found in the literature and often saw the problem as one of developing the right checklist; for DoS it is much more about relationships and a conversation that defies the kind of rigid approach that often characterizes the military orientation. All DoS participants valued the exploration and learning associated with their profession and, as one participant remarked, valued being "thrown into jobs and left to figure it out without much training." This was juxtaposed with a preference for clear goals, timelines, and

results from the DoD participants who criticized the lack of those elements from the DoS counterparts.

Composite Description

The results from the individual research questions and associated data sources (organizational literature and semi-structured interviews) allow for a composite description of the inter-organizational space between the DoD and DoS. The ideological, cultural, behavioral, and structural elements of both organizations were combined using the basic structure of Hilden and Tikkamaki's (2013) *Reflective Practice Framework*, but in a form that allowed for the display of information associated with both organizations (Figure 3). The composite description captures the interplay of the various levels of the organization and the themes found through analysis of the organizational literature and participant interviews, as well as the purpose and benefits to leveraging both sources and approaches in a complementary manner. The composite description of the DoD and DoS ecosystem will facilitate a discussion of challenges and opportunities associated with boundary spanning activities for collaboration in Chapter 5.

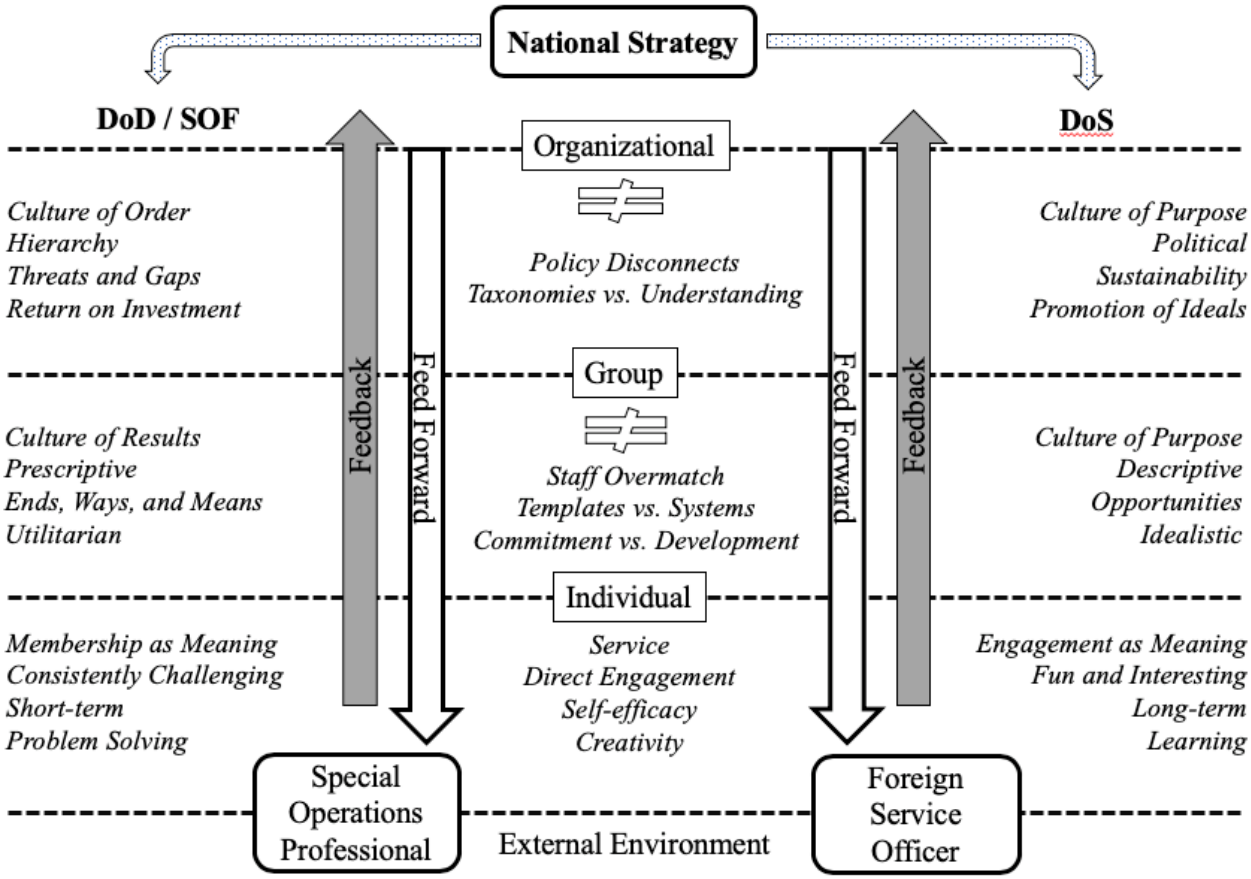

Figure 4. Special Operations and Department of State inter-organizational ecosystem.

Summary

The purpose of this research was to facilitate collaboration between U.S. interagency and SOF through an examination of the role of culture and language in the inter-organizational space. The organizational ethnographic approach was used to explore and describe the interplay of organizational culture and collaboration in the interagency environment with a focus on the U.S. Department of State, the Department of Defense, and Special Operations. The use of organizational literature and semi-structured interviews allowed for a composite understanding of the organizational culture and the individual subjective experiences and perspectives within the organizations.

Understanding the inherent cognition associated with individuals in the organizationally influenced path-dependent cognitions was critical to understanding paths and obstacles to effective boundary spanning and collaboration.

The first research question concerned the organizations and the presence or absence of ideological consensus and positive evaluations of the other organization as communicated in the literature associated with each organization. As can be seen in Figure 5, there was significant misalignment between the ideology and culture present at the organizational and group levels. There were almost no mentions of SOF in the DoS literature, only allusions, and collaboration was implied throughout. Paradoxically, abundant positive evaluations of DoS in the DoD and SOF literature were diminished by the utilitarian "ways and means" culture that saturated the literature. The DoD proclivity for classification of activities and taxonomies of warfare result in a prescriptive approach to understanding context that is misaligned with the more descriptive and systems perspective present in the DoS literature.

Research question two and the semi-structured interviews further illuminated the organizational gaps and added individual perspectives on the cultural and normative aspects of organizational identity. The themes of service, direct engagement, self-efficacy, and creativity offer promise as paths to boundary spanning at the level of the individual SOF professional and DoS Foreign Service Officer. However, the organizational context presents significant obstacles to collaboration. The SOF participants characterized the DoS as highly political and bureaucratic, overly aspirational, and lacking clear direction; the DoS participants bemoaned the military

chains of command and staff overmatch, templated solutions, and obsession with plans and end states. These themes described were reflected at the organizational, group, and individual levels of each organization and almost symmetrical opposed between the organizations.

In Chapter 5, the purpose and nature of the study will provide context for an interpretation of the findings within the conceptual framework, scope of the study, and the limitations to trustworthiness that arose from the execution of the study. Recommendations for future research will be guided by both the strengths and limitations of this study and in the context of recent developments in DoD. Finally, the implications for positive social change, theoretical implications, and recommendations for practice will be described.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This chapter provides an interpretation of the findings, describes the limitations of the research, makes recommendations for further research, and explores the implications for positive social change and practice. This research was conducted to examine organizational culture and identity within Special Operations Forces (SOF) and interagency partners to identify opportunities and challenges associated with interagency networks and collaboration. Methods and mechanisms for increased interagency collaboration and civil-military cooperation continue to be a focus and subject of research efforts and policy directives, which indicate that the problem is far from fully illuminated. This research developed a composite understanding of the studied organizations (U.S. SOF and Department of State [DoS]) at the organizational, group, and individual levels.

The research found significant ideological and evaluative themes in the organizational literature and cultural and normative themes in through the semi-structured interviews. Together, the information provided a composite description of the inter-organizational space and associated tensions and opportunities at various levels of the organization. The findings highlight cultural, structural, temporal, and orientation challenges and opportunities for collaboration.

At the organizational level, there were significant misalignments of policy and juxtaposition of culture focused on order (DoD/SOF) and a culture of purpose and ideals (DoS). The group level uncovered structural challenges between the organizations (described as “staff overmatch” by DoS participants); the SOF culture of results with a

utilitarian perspective at odds with a DoS culture or purpose focused on opportunities and ideals. Finally, analysis at the individual level showed misalignment between the source of meaning and temporal reference (short- or long-term) for individuals. However, both groups attached significant meaning on service, direct engagement, self-efficacy, and creativity; these elements provide opportunities for boundary spanning, as will be described further below.

Interpretation of the Findings

The composite description highlighted the dynamics and interplay of organizational culture and identity and their role in affecting the worldview, sense making, and priorities of the constituents of any organization (Raisene, 2012). All professionals studied were volunteers from highly competitive public service roles. In such roles, where individuals self-select and compete for membership, the organizational culture is as much a basis for the selection and shaping of members, as it is external communication and projection (Smith, 2012). The compatible sense of service, self-efficacy, and need for engagement found at the individual level are strong points of commonality that can be leveraged for boundary spanning (i.e., as a boundary object).

Additionally, primary meaning was derived from either an external or internal locus in the two organizations studied. The SOF professionals derived meaning from membership in the organization and that was the lens through which actions in the world were translated; the DoS professionals derived meaning from the external environment and engagement and the organization served as more of a means to that end. Researchers (Korschun, 2015; Meerkerk & Edelenbos, 2014) have acknowledged the tension between

autonomy and interdependence as well as the tendency for boundary-spanner allegiances to be questioned, and my results indicate this tension could present significant challenges to developing boundary spanners within SOF.

The research demonstrates the equal importance of understanding the cultural perspectives of other organizations (perspective-taking) and the perspective making cultural forces within our own organizations (Langan-Fox & Cooper, 2014; Mor, 2013). The calls for collaboration that echo throughout the DoD and SOF organizational are well-intentioned. However, when coupled with the utilitarian and order-based aspects of the DoD and SOF enterprises, and the disproportionate populations of those two organizations as compared to DoS, these calls threaten to unleash hordes of well-intentioned military professionals that will only exacerbate the structural misalignment described as "staff overmatch" by several of the DoS participants. Nonetheless, all participants had some degree of awareness and reflexivity concerning outsider perceptions of their respective organizations; this is a strong basis to integrate and institutionalize change at the group and organizational levels (Guzman, 2013; Hilden & Tikkamaki, 2013).

The language used in the organizational literature highlights the role of language as an internal shaping and curating mechanism which is simultaneously an external communication mode (Carter, 2013; Jones & Volpe, 2011; Korschun, 2015). There are inherent contradictions in much of the organizational literature and those contradictions represent significant boundaries to collaboration. The DoD and SOF preference for order, categorization, linear thinking, and prescriptive approaches does not provide a good

bridge to collaboration with the DoS and the ideals focused, descriptive, and systems perspective found in the study; this can negatively shape the perceptions of potential partners before they have the opportunity to meet at the individual level.

Limitations of the Study

The changing and evolving values and culture at institutions and organizations are one limitation of this study. Since this study began, the organizations continue to evolve as national policies and leaders change. This study was conducted utilizing organizational literature from the past ten years with an emphasis on Africa. The worldview, sense making, and priorities of the constituents of any organization and the organization itself, are often highly contextual.

Though the findings of this research may, and likely will, apply to other areas of SOF engagement, further study and analysis will be required prior to application outside of the scope of the present study. The findings at the group and organizational levels relied on data that was specific to the organizations rather than the setting in Africa; therefore, they are more readily transferable than the insights gained at the individual level. The participants all had experience working with members of the other organization, so there may be issues applying the approach and findings to individuals that do not have any familiarity with the members of an adjacent organization.

Recommendations for Further Study

There is significant potential for further study building on this effort. As will be discussed in the conclusion, I was already provided an opportunity to conduct a much wider study based on this effort. The social dynamics (e.g., rituals, routines, language)

involved in organizations are as well-suited to the qualitative approach used in this study as villages or tribes (Kalou & Sadler-Smith, 2015). Th SOF organizational context offers a setting in which existing well-defined populations and structure that is conducive to application of the organizational ethnographic method, though access is a significant issue for outsiders.

A study of the alignment between the desired attributes (i.e., selection and hiring criteria) and incentive mechanisms in organizations that must collaborate could identify additional intersections and opportunities to better shape the organizational culture. Additionally, more in-depth analysis of word choice in organizational documents and communication could be conducted to identify words and styles that better shape perceptions and set conditions for collaborative relationships. Finally, the structural aspects of the organizations should be studied to identify opportunities to better manage the imbalances in staff sizes for more purposeful collaboration.

Implications for Social Change and Practice

The maritime domain and oceans "will haunt our policy and our choices in this turbulent twenty-first century. The oceans will matter deeply to every aspect of human endeavor" (Stavridis, 2017, p. 4). Collaboration is necessary to confront wicked problems and complex challenges. The U.S. spends a significant amount of money on its instruments of national power. Increased collaboration between the organizations that promote stability and deter conflict should produce more efficacious and efficient results in confronting wicked problems; more positively and sustainably serve the affected populations; illuminate pathways for future application; and facilitate the ethical

execution of public funds for the common good. Confronting collaborative challenges in addressing these wicked problems is an equally important goal for the citizens of the U.S. as well as those in areas facing instability and uncertainty around the globe.

Climate change, population shifts, and competition for resources will continue to place pressure on coastal areas around the world. The problems that drove the development of this research have not gone away and the instability in East Africa is not an isolated phenomenon. The U.S. must leverage all elements of national power in a synchronized manner and in conjunction with international partners to address adaptive challenge and cross-cutting issues globally; military solutions alone will not work.

The execution of U.S. foreign policy is an equally high-consequence and expensive endeavor. Better collaborative relationships between and synchronization of SOF and DoS efforts is tied to both greater efficacy and more ethical use of public funds to realize foreign policy objectives. Continuing to confront these challenges will organizations that learn, evolve, and who have instituted reflective practice; this research contributes to those goals by answering long-standing USSOCOM priority research topics (JSOU, 2019).

Recommendations for Practice

Groysberg, Lee, Price, and Cheng (2018) identified "four levers for evolving a culture" that include articulation of the desired culture, selection and development of "leaders who align with the target culture," "organizational conversions about culture," (p. 51), and reinforcement of "the desired change through organizational design" (p. 52). More awareness should be given to externally facing SOF and DoD literature, so that it

conveys a more collaborative friendly message beyond simply repeating the word "collaboration." At the organizational level, continuous calls for collaboration as thing unto itself may be counter-productive to the degree that it exacerbates the issue of staff overmatch that all DoS participants mentioned.

All participants had self-awareness outsider perceptions of their organization. Because of this, reflective practice and new perceptions must be cultivated and institutionalized through deliberate organizational learning at the individual, group, and organizational levels (Hilden & Tikkamaki, 2013). Attention should be given to the order based, linear, prescriptive, and utilitarian language present in most DoD and SOF literature, so that unintended path-dependencies can be avoided.

USSOCOM should explore tests of cultural intelligence and other measures to identify professionals ideally suited to boundary spanning with specific organizations. SOF spends extensive time and resources on rigorous assessment and selection processes involving numerous psychological assessments, peer evaluations, and observation. This existing data could be leveraged to identify peripheral group members are those who do not embody a majority of traits common to a given organization (Van Kleef, Homan, & Steinel, 2013). Such efforts would create opportunities for increased talent management and ability to harness the significant human capital across Special Operations Forces.

Finally, the desire for a life of engaged service and self-efficacy that was present in individuals of both organizations presents an opportunity for better collaboration. These aspects of culture should be leveraged and placed in the context of well-articulated superordinate goals that exceed the capacity or capability of any one organization

(Langan-Fox & Cooper, 2014) or the interests of an individual organizational member (Rico, Sanchez-Manzanares, Antino, & Lau, 2012). This narrative can be further developed in the professional publications as a shaping and curating mechanism that emphasize how the insights gained in boundary spanning contribute to the growth and development of the organization itself (Langan-Fox & Cooper, 2014); that is a message that would resonate with both populations examined in my research.

Conclusion

During the last year of this research, I became involved in a culture and ethics review ordered at USSOCOM in December, 2018 which ultimately led to the incredible opportunity to conduct a more comprehensive and expansive research effort as a result of this research, which left me struggling to find time to complete this writing. The USSOCOM *Comprehensive Review* (USSOCOM, 2020) which I designed using a qualitative organizational ethnographic approach like this study, but on a much larger scale, with more resources (including a dozen team members), more access that included 55 sites and ~2,000 participants.

The research and analysis began in August 2019, the report was completed on 23 January 2020, and released to the public on 28 January 2020. That experience proved an immensely reflective opportunity to delve deeper in to SOF culture and gain a greater appreciation for the application and value of the research approach taken in this study; particularly for an organization that is not normally inclined to qualitative analysis. The Comprehensive Review (USSOCOM, 2020) produced findings in five areas and 16

associated actions that were adopted by the Commander of United States Special Operations Command.

My dissertation transpired through three operational deployments and five years; I worried that its contributions would be over-shadowed or made obsolete by developments in the profession. Unfortunately, this is not the case and the topic of organizational culture and implications for SOF and USSOCOM remains as relevant as ever. Organizational culture is a powerful tool to harness and leverage from the highest levels of the organization down to the level of individuals. This study provided a composite description of the inter-organizational space to highlight key tensions and opportunities for collaboration and boundary spanning opportunities. The establishment of more effective and reliable collaboration between the instruments of national power will be critical as we continue to face down the high consequence challenges that face the global community.

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Appendix A: Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

Civil-Military Operations (CMO): "Activities… that establish, maintain, influence, or exploit relations between military forces, indigenous populations, and institutions, by directly supporting the attainment of objectives relating to the reestablishment or maintenance of stability within a region or host nation" (Department of Defense, 2010, p. 37).

*Country team: "*The senior, in-country, US coordinating and supervising body, headed by the chief of the US diplomatic mission, and composed of the senior member of each represented US department or agency" (Department of Defense, 2010, p. 59.).

Irregular Warfare (IW): "A violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant population(s)" (Department of Defense, 2010, p. 134).

Joint Special Operations University (JSOU): JSOU is the academic arm of USSOCOM and is the "lead component for all matters pertaining to joint special operations forces (SOF) education" (USSOCOM, 2013, p. 6). JSOU's mission is to "develop SOF and SOF enablers for strategic and operational leadership," "educate military and civilian professionals on the employment of SOF," and "research and publish on national security issues critical to the SOF community" (USSOCOM, 2013, p. 6).

Maritime Domain: "The oceans, seas, bays, estuaries, islands, coastal areas, and the airspace above these, including the littorals" (Department of Defense, 2010, p. 160).

*Maritime Security Operations: "*Those operations to protect maritime sovereignty and resources and to counter maritime-related terrorism, weapons proliferation, transnational crime, piracy, environmental destruction, and illegal seaborne immigration" (Department of Defense, 2010, p. 161).

Operational: "The level of war at which campaigns and major operations are planned, conducted, and sustained to achieve strategic objectives within theaters or other operational areas" (Department of Defense, 2010, p. 190).

Responsibility to Protect (RtoP): the principle that any nation has a "responsibility to protect its populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity" (United Nations, 2014, p. 2). Additional the principle of RtoP affirms "that the international community has a collective responsibility to help to protect populations from acts that have been defined as international crimes (United Nations, 2014, p. 2).

Stability Operations: "An overarching term encompassing various military missions, tasks, and activities conducted outside the United States… to maintain or reestablish a safe and secure environment, provide essential governmental services, emergency infrastructure reconstruction, and humanitarian relief" (Department of Defense, 2010, p. 238).

Strategic: "The level of war at which a nation, often as a member of a group of nations, determines national or multinational (alliance or coalition) strategic security objectives and guidance, then develops and uses national resources to achieve those objectives" (Department of Defense, 2010, p. 241).

Tactical: "The level of war at which battles and engagements are planned and executed to achieve military objectives assigned to tactical units or task forces" (Department of Defense, 2010, p. 248).

*Unified Action: "*The synchronization, coordination, and/or integration of the activities of governmental and nongovernmental entities with military operations to achieve unity of effort" (Department of Defense, 2010, p. 264). The purpose of unified action, also called whole-of-government approach, is to leverage the capabilities and resources of diverse organizations to simultaneously tackle the complex problems involved in stability crises.

United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM): USSOCOM is the "unified command for the worldwide use of special operations elements of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines" (USSOCOM, 2014).

Whole-of-Government Approach: see *Unified Action*.

Appendix B: Key Search Terms and Databases Used for Research

Databases (in alphabetical order)

- Academic Search Complete
- International Security and Counter Terrorism Reference Center
- Political Science Complete
- Proquest
- Sage Premier
- Walden University Thoreau Multidisciplinary Research Database

Key Search Terms (in alphabetical order)

- boundary spanning
- collaboration
- communication networks
- interagency
- interorganizatonal
- networks
- organizational ethnography
- policy networks
- social capital

Appendix C: 10 Distinguishing Properties of Wicked Problems (Rittel & Webber, 1973)

1. There is no definitive formulation of a wicked problem (p. 161).

2. Wicked problems have no stopping rule (p. 162).

3. Solutions to wicked problems are not true-or-false, but good-or-bad (p. 162).

4. There is no immediate and no ultimate test of a solution to a wicked problem (p. 163).

5. Every solution to a wicked problem is a "one-shot operation"; because there is no opportunity to learn by trial-and-error, every attempt counts significantly (p. 163).

6. Wicked problems do not have an enumerable (or an exhaustively describable) set of potential solutions, nor is there a well-described set of permissible operations that may be incorporated into the plan (p. 164).

7. Every wicked problem is essentially unique (p. 164).

8. Every wicked problem can be considered to be a symptom of another problem (p. 165).

9. The existence of a discrepancy representing a wicked problem can be explained in numerous ways. The choice of explanation determines the nature of the problem's resolution (p. 166).

10. The planner has no right to be wrong (p. 166).

Appendix D: Relevant and Related Joint Special Operations University Research Topics

2016 Research Topics

A7. Identifying, assessing, developing, and motivating potential partners in irregular warfare: Supporting effective partnerships Irregular warfare (IW) is a violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant population(s). Recent conflicts have highlighted opportunities and policy dilemmas in the conduct and support of IW. In most of these conflicts, the United States has partnered with state or non-state actors to support or oppose an existing government. What are the best practices and other mechanisms for understanding, identifying, assessing, developing, and motivating potential partners' behavior, objectives, organization, and composition to successfully partner with SOF? Which partnership efforts are most effective and most cost-efficient? What other interests or issues must be considered (stability, capability, et cetera) when partnering with others in conducting and supporting IW? (JSOU, 2015, p. 5)

2014 Research Topics

F2. Improving USSOCOM's approach to interagency collaboration. The fifth "SOF truth" states most special operations require non-SOF support, and this concept extends to interagency partners. Given USSOCOM's mission, what is the best approach to conducting effective interagency collaboration? Should there be a change in structure and/or process? What are some lessons learned from USSOCOM's experience working with interagency partners and how can these lessons be used to improve the organization? How should USSOCOM – National Capitol Region be organized, and how should it interact with interagency organizations? What is the best model for USSOCOM to effectively collaborate with other agencies? How have USSOCOM interagency programs helped or hindered the DOD's interagency objectives? (JSOU, 2013, p. 32)

F7. SOF communication: Inside and out. SOF are often referred to as a community. If so, it is a diverse one that can, at times, be isolated and secretive. This isolation can be due to operational necessity, but it is not always warranted. How can the SOF community better communicate within its confines and with outside elements? What are the legitimate concerns and rules, and what are merely impediments from history and force of habit? Some organizations are more secretive than others. As an example, SF soldiers have been called the silent professionals; however, recent news releases have indicated that might not be a SOF community attribute. What are the cultural implications? (JSOU, 2013, pp. 33-34)

2013 Research Topics

A5. Intelligence community and SOF cooperation. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan over the past decade have seen an unprecedented rise in the need for

cooperation among the intelligence community and Special Operations Forces. This increased need for cooperation requires a closer look to determine what initiatives have been successful and what opportunities for improvement exist. How might the intelligence community and SOF better cooperate/ integrate in the future? What are the strengths and weaknesses of both communities? What are the implications of the specialized legal authorities each holds? (JSOU, 2012, p. 3)

D3. The SOF supporting role in whole-of-government approaches. Under a national counterterrorism strategy that emphasizes a whole- of-government approach and robust use of indirect activities, SOF will often play a supporting role in activities led by other U.S. Government agencies, especially the Department of State (DOS). What can or should be done to prepare SOF and USSOCOM to operate effectively in an interagency and DOS-led environment? Similarly, how can the interagency be better prepared to work with USSOCOM/ SOF? Is there a need to develop an interagency operating concept, similar to the joint operating concept to more clearly articulate the processes and authorities of various interagency partners in order to increase integration? What role can/should professional development opportunities play in increasing integration? (JSOU, 2012, p. 20)

G9. Bridging the DOD-nongovernmental organization divide. There is an existing history of NGO aversion to cooperation and identification with U.S. military forces. Yet, military professionals and NGO professionals share much in common in regard to values and commitment. And, increasingly they share the same operational space. More recently, some members of the NGO community have begun to question their aversion, and the military has developed a new appreciation for what NGOs can do to help in fragile states. Should we further bridge the DOD-NGO divide, and if so, how? What are the reasons for the divide? What are the advantages and disadvantages of greater cooperation? Where does it make sense, and where is it not appropriate? Are there ways to facilitate shared operational space issues? Are there doctrinal precepts? What are they? What are the mechanisms of bridging—for example, doctrine, education, and structural? Are there unique SOCOM roles and responsibilities in regard to NGOs? What are possibilities and the pros and cons of SOF working with NGOs? (JSOU, 2012, p. 39)

Appendix E: Participant Biographical / Experience Questionnaire

Participant Biographical /Experience Questionnaire

1. Who is your current employer (government organization)?

2. How long have you been with your current employer?

3. Have you worked for any other government organizations / agencies? If yes, which ones and for how long?

4. What are your total years of government service?

5. During what periods have you served in East Africa?

6. How often have you worked, or do you work, with the military (if nonmilitary) or other government agencies (if military)?